STEWARDSHIP URBANISM

A Vision for a Sustainable Portland

Clayton T. Ragan

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A Vision for a Sustainable Portland

by
Clayton T. Ragan

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Date

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I'd like to begin by thanking my advisor Andrew Santa Lucia for always reminding me of my radical intentions and for pushing me to explore a different artistic language.

I'd also like to thank Aaron Whelton, my committee member for his insights and feedback.

To my cohort, we made it! This would not have been possible without your solidarity and friendship. In particular, I'd like to acknowledge my friend Santiago Gil for his many wonderful insights and questions. Our early discussions and research deeply informed the trajectory of this thesis, "stewardship" became my watchword after one of our conversations.

Thank you to my family for all of your love and support. Mom, Dad, I love y'all dearly and I know every day that you're proud of me and I cannot begin to thank you enough for all the encouragement and support you have given me through all of my education. Gammill, I love you bro. I'm so glad that you have been up here with me thorugh this. Look forward to having you by my side for wahtever comes next.

And finally, thank you to my dearest Stevie, for always speaking your mind, through you I see the world differently and more critically, for your support and understanding, and for the limitless love you give me.

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Introduction

Several years ago I became acutely aware of how much space American society gives up to the automobile. Through walking the streets of American cities and obsessively analyzing the satellite images on Google maps I became more and more frustrated by how badly we are wasting our urban space. The more I thought about the problem the more I knew that I needed to think about addressing the problem. I began to take crude measurements of parking lots and mapping out the square footage of grocery stores and apartments that could inhabit those lots. It was at this point that I realized that I didn't have the first idea of how to begin designing a building and perhaps more critically, how to begin visualizing a building so that others could see my vision. It was this desire to design an alternative to our current sprawl and wastefulness that led me to pursue this Master of Architecture.

When I began working on this thesis in earnest one of my questions was how to confront questions of ownership and the typical profit and rent seeking motives that drive the development of our cities. I did not want to just propose a set of zoning reforms that would allow for more private development orchestrated by a few developers without consideration for the social, economic, or ecological sustainability of the city. The word “stewardship” emerged from my early conversations and musings on these questions. It quickly became my watchword and a core value which I built up from. Stewardship is a culturally loaded term but I use it in this context to emphasize the thoughtfulness and responsibility that comes with genuinely caring for and conserving something as opposed to treating it as disposable. Thus, I present stewardship as an alternative to the contemporary paradigm of ownership. Whereas ownership grants the owner the right to abuse, destroy, dispose of , and consume, stewardship places those who would be stewards in a responsibility to care for, maintain, and preserve.

As such this thesis has two propositions, the first is a critique of space and the second is a critique of political economy. These two propositions inform one another as the proposed interventions are situated in a proposed political-economic system. Thus this thesis is situated at an imprecise point in the future where Portland is radically more democratic and sustainable. This thesis begins by summarizing the research that I conducted leading up to the design portion. Then I introduce the site location. The critique of space and the critique of political economy are broken up into two chapters that will explain the design process and the final products as well as my thoughts on how a proposed alternative to our present economic system could function. I will devote a brief chapter to the graphical language that I developed for this thesis and my thoughts on the importance of these skills of proposing a better world. Finally, I will devote two sections to my conclusions and some thoughts on how this thesis could be further iterated upon.

MANIFESTO

This thesis aims to develop an alternative code for a possible future for Portland that focuses on the development and stewardship of the commons to ensure social, economic, and ecological sustainability. This will be achieved through the design of a segment of Sandy Blvd centered around the intersection of that street and SE 11th and Ankeny.

We are on an unsustainable course.

Our environment suffers from overproduction and pollution. Our economy strains under the weight of sprawl and rent seeking. Our society is frayed by isolation and alienation. The myth of progress unravels before our eyes as the environment degrades and life gets more expensive despite hitherto unknown production. The powerful and the unimaginative say that we only need to tweak our regulations and the Free Market will provide the solutions.

The Free Market Will Not Save Us!

The Wealthy and the Powerful Will Not Save Us!

Blind Faith in Progress Will Not Save Us!

If we want to live in a sustainable society then we must build one, not try in vain to incentivize someone else to build it. We cannot hope that there will be profit in sustainability. We must take an active role in stewarding the resources we have.

Government Must Be About Stewardship

Planning Must Be About Stewardship

Architecture Must Be About Stewardship

But what will this civic stewardship look like? What sort of demands should we make? Here follows an incomplete list:

An end to car dependency

Depaving of all extraneous pavement

Renewable and recyclable construction materials

Intentional use and maintenance of existing structures

Guaranteed neighborhood amenities and services (groceries, pharmacies, et cetera.)

Maintenance and preservation of ecosystems

Places where we can just exist.

Clean Air. Clean Water. Clean Land.

To this end we must promulgate a new mode of urban planning and a new code to guide our efforts. This code must move beyond the hyper prescriptivism of our contemporary codes and embrace local idiosyncrasies and flexibility so that we can meet the challenges of our time. Our new forms of planning must center our right to the city and to a democratic process of development and inhabitation. We need new commons to restore our social bonds and our relationship with nature!

Restore the Commons! Rebuild the Commons! Reinhabit the Commons!

It is not enough to want these things but we must also dream them. This is a crucial role for designers. We have the tools and the knowledge to show what can be. We can show the gardens and the parks that will replace the pavement. The homes that will replace the parking lots. The tram stops and the grocery stores in every neighborhood. This city needs a vision and a visualization of that vision if we want to tackle the present crisis of sustainability.

A sustainable world is possible and it is ours to build!

Research

This section provides a summary of my research and as such this section is a primer that will lay the foundation for the arguments that I will make throughout this thesis. There is a range of subject matter covered here and it is not an exhaustive account but is intended to introduce the key concepts, histories, and thinkers that informed my thinking and the development of my proposals.

The cultural and economic reasons for sprawl

My research began by trying to better understand the origins of the contemporary American urban landscape with a particular interest toward the origins of sprawl and exclusionary zoning. There are two key lenses through which to analyze this phenomenon: a socio-culutral approach that emphasizes the American cultural idiosyncrasies around consumption and segregation and a historical materialist approach that emphasizes the economic drivers that influence both policy makers and consumers. These two approaches to historical analysis are not mutually exclusive nor do I privilege one above the other.

The cultural analysis begins by understanding that this country's wasteful land use policies are a consequence of the belief that this country, its land and its resources, are infinite.[1] This cultural value predisposes Americans against conservationism, after all why preserve something if there is always more of it? This belief reinforces an economic ideology that holds infinite growth as not only possible but necessary. Millions of acres have been cleared and drained to build millions of detached homes with the belief that there are millions more acres to be claimed and developed. This belief in the inexhaustible nature of space fuels the belief that all Americans can have and are entitled to their own slice of this country, their own homestead over which they will be its master. The cultural affinity towards the detached single family home is rooted in this "American Dream", a fantasy of power and independence.

Another key driver of this pattern of development is racism. This can be seen in the arguments that early proponents of single family zoning made in Berkeley, California where the first modern US zoning code was adopted. Arguments for legally prohibiting mixed use structures explicitly cited the tendency of Chinese-Americans to live in domiciles attached to the laundries that they typically ran as a consequence of being excluded from most other forms of work in the city. They argued that by prohibiting mixed uses the Chinese population would not be able to afford both a separate workspace and housing in a neighborhood and would thus be de facto excluded from white neighborhoods.[2] Beyond this the practice of redlining, which prevented racial minorities from getting favorable loans to buy land and housing in the twentieth century when the Federal Government was subsidizing the suburbanization of the USA through the Federal Housing Administration.

The economic analysis focuses on both the Federal Government's role in subsidizing sprawl and the need for growth in a capitalist economic system. Seeking to restart the American economy during the Great Depression the Federal Government began subsidizing single family housing by backing 30 year mortgages and automobile ownership through highway construction.[3] Through the Federal Housing Administration millions of Americans were able to move into new constructed suburbs which spurred demand for real estate and new

construction. In addition to fulfilling American ideas of property ownership these new houses created the base for post war middle class wealth and consumerism. These new homes needed new furniture, modern appliances, and of course, cars. These new developments would not be served by expanded mass transit but instead by an ever increasing network of highways which in addition to creating demand for automobiles created a permanent demand for oil.[4] Through these subsidies the American economy became hooked on sprawl.

Parking

As more and more Americans began driving as their primary mode of transportation cities became increasingly covered in pavement, not just to drive on but to park on. Parking is often wildly over built as a result of parking minimums and the perception that there is never enough parking. We expect parking to be free, convenient, and plentiful, a trifecta of incompatible desires. If parking is free then the most convenient spots will always be full and given the amount of space it requires if it is plentiful then only a few privileged spots near the destination will actually be convenient.[5] The result has been a sea of parking that is economically, socially, and ecologically dead.

The consequences of all of this pavement cannot be overstated. Hard pavement is by definition not porous and thus greatly exacerbates storm runoff and heightens the chances of flooding. Vast, largely unshaded expanses of concrete and asphalt become massive heat sinks which worsen the urban heat island effect. In Portland there can be a difference of 17F between the hottest and coolest parts of the city during the summer.[6] Additionally, the thermal mass of the pavement releases heat throughout the night meaning that areas with more pavement do not get relief at night. It is perhaps obvious to state that parking lots are the opposite of green space, thus the more paved space there is in a city the less space there is for socialization and play as well as habitat for animals.

Car dependency and its consequences

In addition to the negative effects of extraneous pavement there are a number of other negative ramifications of car dependency. Here follows an inexhaustive list:

- Tire breakdown introduces microplastics to the air, water, and soil
- Increased social atomization
- Increased risk of death and disfigurement (in the past 5 years an average of 61 people have been killed in PDX in car crashes)[7]
- Increased financial burden on individuals and communities
- Automobile emissions are a major contributor to global warming

Housing beyond the market

Housing is of particular interest to my critique of political economy. I am writing this at a time when housing is a central political concern in Portland, from houselessness to the shortfall in housing production to concerns about the rising cost of housing. This crisis of housing is a direct consequence of the economic unsustainability of the market and the social unsustainability that it produces. Market fluctuations in rent and house prices displaces people from a neighborhood which in turn strains the community and if the situation is bad enough can destroy a community. A community can not surve, let alone thrive, without trust and stability. This thesis proposes alternatives to the market based development, provisioning, and maintenance of housing and thus I have researched alternatives to the free market in particular the social housing model, best exemplified by the Viennese Model, and community land trusts.

Participatory economics, social ecology, and the commons

Finally, I want to note several thinkers and ideological strains that I researched to better understand possible alternatives to market capitalism while still pursuing a more decentralized approach to political economy. This is not an exhaustive list of theorists and researchers that influenced me but a select list of

those which were of particular insight while I was developing the proposals in this thesis.

Participatory Economics: This idea came from two left economists, Michael Albert and Robin Hahnel who wanted to develop an alternative to both capitalist markets and the Soviet style planned economy. Their framework postulates that the economy could be organized in a bottom up fashion through consumers sending requests to the producers/provisioners and through producers and provisioners working with their consumers to meet needs and set expectations. This theory draws heavily on early twentieth century theories, such as anarcho-syndicalism. The key idea is that the market could be abolished through this direct communication and that this horizontal communication would make it possible to not have any central planning. Albert and Hahnel were particularly enthusiastic about the possibilities of the computer to facilitate all of this communication. For more information please refer to Looking Forward (1991).

Social Ecology and Libertarian Municipalism: I have long been influenced by the ideas of Murray Bookchin, an anarchist and environmentalist thinker who was active from the mid twentieth century until his death in 2006. Social Ecology is a framework that views social concerns as inherently linked to ecological concerns and thus argues for a society that has a more deeply integrated relationship with nature. Libertarian municipalism is a theory that the best form of social arrangement is at the city level and that directly democratic cities should form confederations within ecoregions and bioregions. Bookinchin argued that an ecological society would be inherently decentralized as local people are best suited to make decisions about the local environment since they are the people who interact with it and can hold deep knowledge about its idiosyncrasies. For more information please refer to Post-Scarcity Anarchism (1971) or The Politics of Social Ecology (1998).

Elinor Ostrom's research on commons: Ostrom was a scholar of political economy who I learned about through researching this thesis and is the only thinker I am specifically calling out who never identified with the political left. However, her work on the phenomenon of the commons was deeply influential to me as she made many interesting observations about the nature of commons, both contemporary and historical. In fact her research was spurred on as a reaction to Garret Hardin's infamous "tragedy of the commons" which Ostrom thoroughly refuted over her long career. She wrote much about the nature of trust and the myriad of ways that commons can be and have been organized and governed without the state or markets. For more information please refer to "Beyond Markets and States: Polycentric Governance of Complex Economic Systems." (2010) or Derek Wall's Elinor Ostrom's Rules for Radicals (2017).

David Graeber and anarchist anthropology: Graeber has been extremely influential to me over the years. Debt was one of the first books I read after finishing my undergraduate education and, having majored in anthropology, I came away thinking that much of the received wisdom that I had grown up with about "human nature" was not only wrong but had no real basis in reality. Reading Graeber's was extremely reaffirming to me since the bulk of his writings deal with questioning many of the most basic assumptions that the public and academics have about human history. His writings challenged established narratives from the origins of money to origins of authority using a wide range of historical and anthropological sources. A central theme that runs through his writing is that we are not doomed to hierarchy and coercion but are instead capable of such remarkable creativity that we can, and often have, come up with alternatives to this state of affairs. For more information please refer to Debt: the First 5000 Years (2014) and The Dawn of Everything (2021), which was co-authored with David Wengrow.

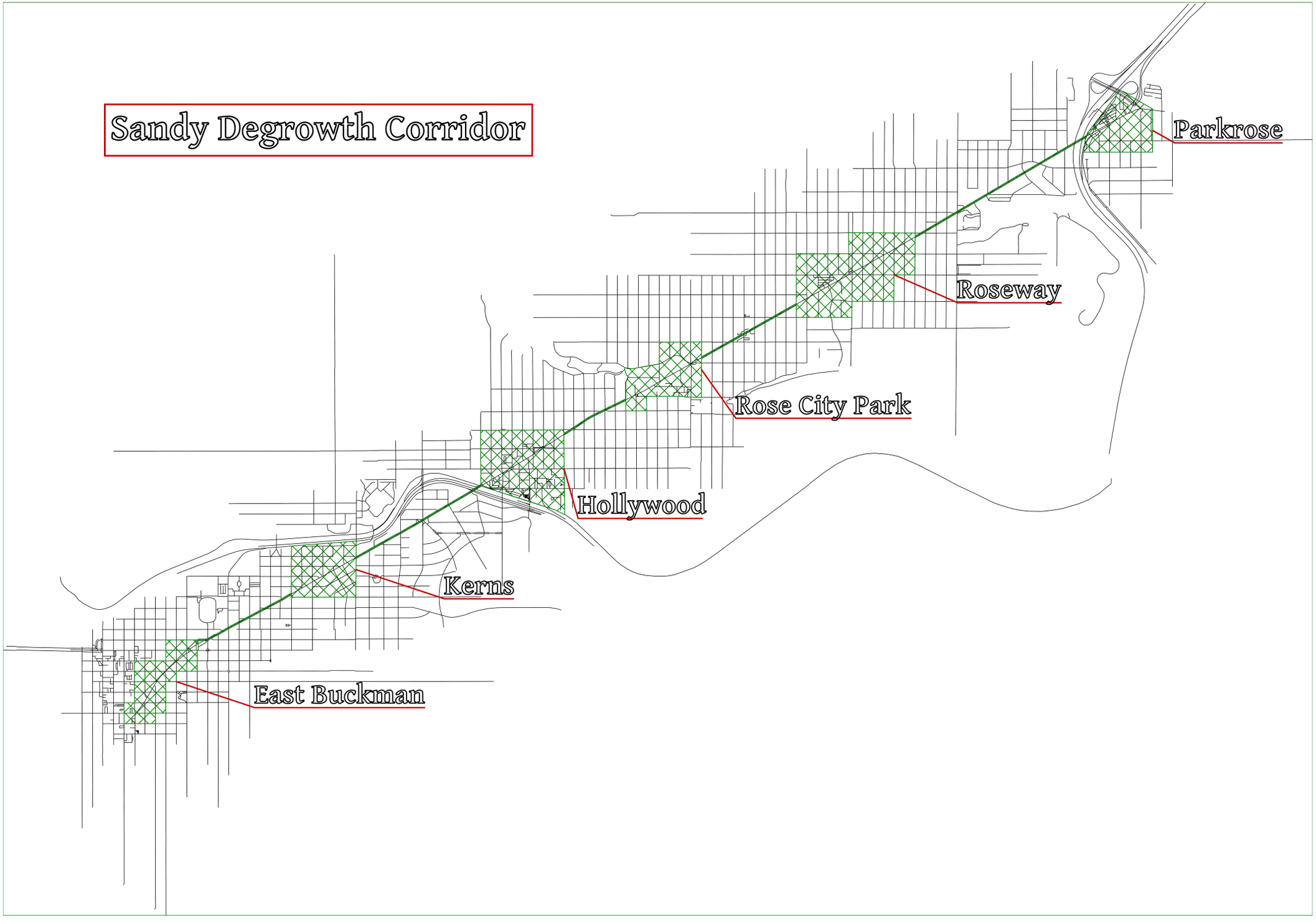
Site

Location

The site centers around the intersection of SE Ankeny, SE 11th, and Sandy Blvd. The design intervention is mostly focused on a one block radius that is bounded by Burnside to the north, 12th to the east, Ash to the south, and 10th to the west. The site is located entirely within the Buckman neighborhood but is bordered by Kerns north of Burnside. The site is within the Central Eastside area which spans multiple neighborhoods in an area along the Willamette River historically dominated by light industry. The site sits at the edge of this district and the more residential portion of the neighborhood.

Sandy Degrowth Corridor

In addition to the designs for this specific site, this thesis proposes a "Degrowth Corridor" along the entirety of Sandy Blvd which would connect neighborhood nodes with greenways and mass rail transit. Sandy Blvd runs diagonally through East Portland cutting across the grid and in doing so creates six way intersections which in turn create difficult moments to navigate in the urban fabric. This is exacerbated by the width of the right of way which is 55' across. This proposal would create several car-free neighborhood centers which would act as seeds to transform the Eastside along this axis. The corridor would run the entire length of Sandy Blvd from its western terminus in the Central Eastside where it merges with 7th St out to the Parkrose Transit Center in the Parkrose Neighborhood. Streetcar or light rail would run along the corridor from Parkrose TC to E Burnside St. while a bike/micro mobility greenway would run along the entire length. The key nodes along the corridor would be from 7th to Burnside in Buckman, 22nd to 28th in Kerns, all of Hollywood, 51st to 58th in Rose City Park, 68th to 79th in Roseway, and from I-205 to 102nd in Parkrose.


Sandy Degrowth Corridor
Parkrose
Roseway
Rose City Park
Hollywood
Kerns
East Buckman

Site Character

As I have already noted the site centers around the six way intersection created by Sandy Blvd which divides the existing site in two. Due to Sandy's width and the awkward crossings at the intersection the site is difficult to traverse in its present form. In fact, at every presentation I gave on this thesis at least one person commented that they knew the intersection and disliked trying to navigate it. This disrupts the flow of the area and limits the potential of this site to grow and become more vibrant. The immediate area is home to a number of bars and restaurants which bring a lot of activity to the area but it always feels disjointed physically and conceptually. One of the bars on the site is Workers Tap (12th and Ankeny) which is a workers cooperative. This was one of the draws to select this site as the bar's ownership model reflects the types of ownership models that will be proposed later in this thesis. Additionally, as a site for radical gatherings and discourse. Over the years I have been influenced by many conversations I have had there. Even before I began on this project I had several conversations about what the neighboring vacant lots could house.

The site has a liminal character that reflects its position on the edges of several different areas. Twelfth street is the boundary between the industrial and the residential inner eastside although it is a fairly permeable boundary. To the west, the blocks are largely inhabited by light industries and warehouses whereas to the east the landscape is dominated by pre WWII housing stock. However, houses and apartment buildings are found west of 12th and there are scattered industrial uses east of 12th, particularly on the blocks along Burnside. Burnside is also the border between Kerns and Burnside and the city's northeast and southeast quadrants.

Burnside, 12th, and Sandy are zoned to allow the construction of mixed use apartment buildings which has led to several being built in the last decade. These five-over-ones are often derided as ugly and they take up most of the blocks they are built on with poor ground floor activation. This is a consequence of the ground floors being taken up by parking and the exorbitant rents charged for the poorly designed retail spaces. Thus these buildings increase the density of residents but don't create much space for services or amenities.

Thus this area feels as if it is trying to grow and evolve but cannot on account of the stifling asphalt and even when it does it is driven by speculative developments that do not benefit the urban fabric. There is a feeling that this could be an even more vibrant and dense area if it could only grow differently. This thesis attempts to tap into the energy and potential of this site and to give a glimpse of what it could be.

Figure 3.1: Sandy Degrowth Corridor, *opposite.*

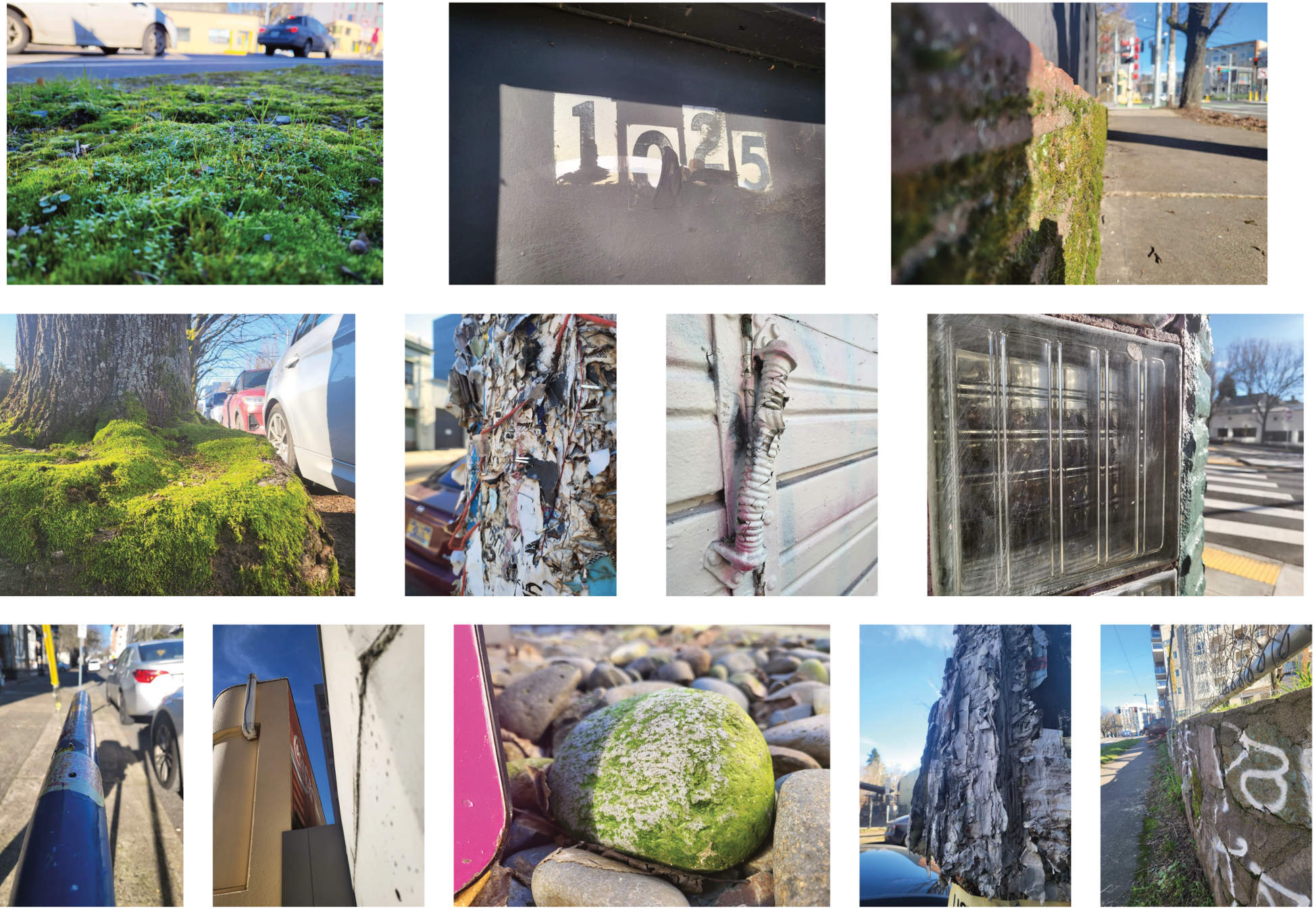


Figure 3.2 : Collage of site images

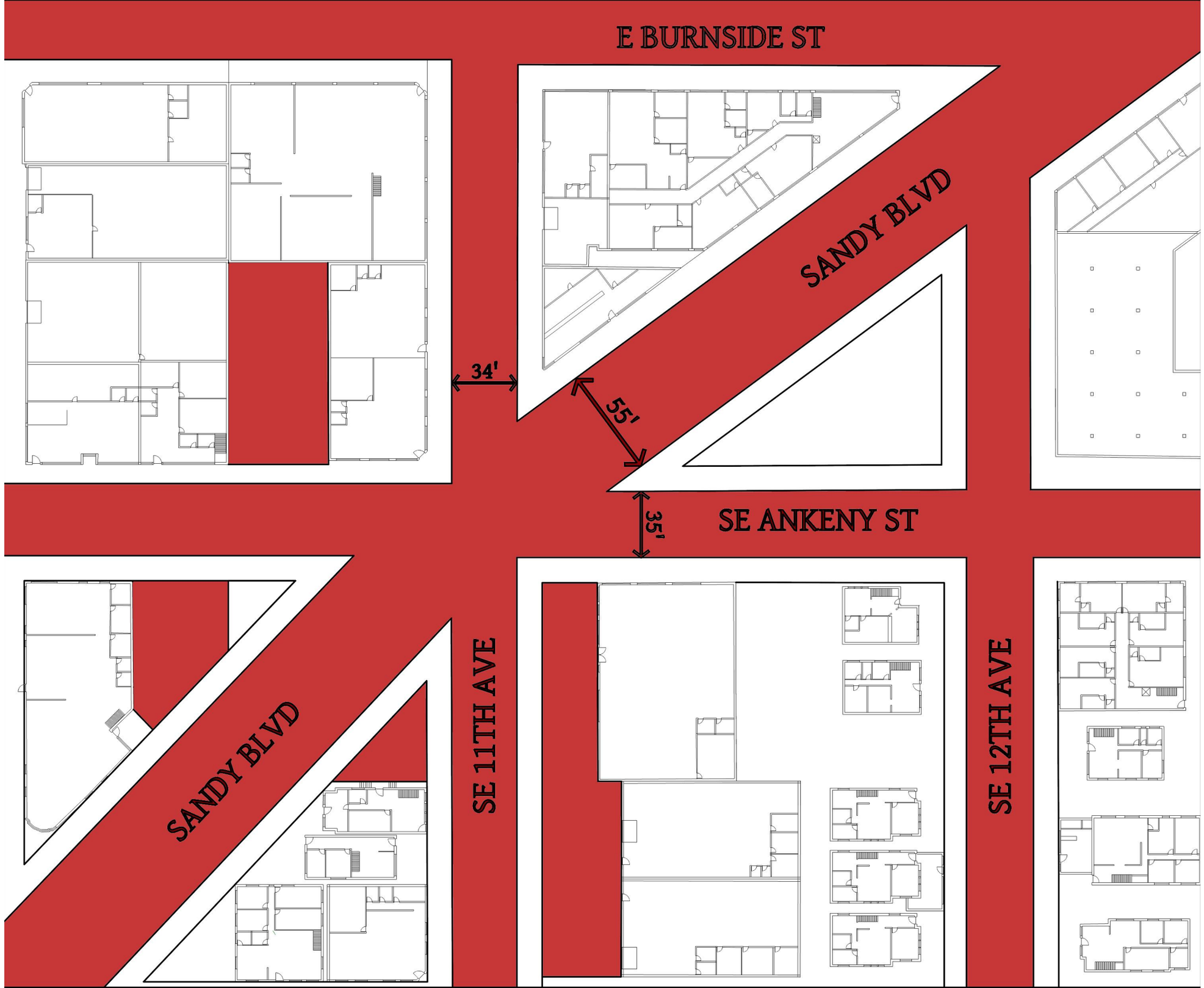
Figure 3.3 : Images showing the nature of the intersection of Sandy Blvd, 11th St, and Ankeny St.

Critique of Space

Sacred buildings, sacrificial roads

As I began designing an early rhetorical device that I came up with was that in the twentieth century our cities, their buildings and parks, were treated as sacrificial for the construction of new roads whereas this thesis proposes holding the buildings, that hold our lives and livelihoods, sacred and treat the roads a sacrificial to undo the damage that was wrought in the last century. Another way of phrasing this would be, that the city was sacrificed for the car with inordinate amounts of space given over to the operation and storage of these dangerous and polluting machines. The core site for this thesis is roughly 39% pavement for cars between the roads and the parking lots. By eliminating the parking lots and narrowing the roads for cycling traffic the site gains roughly 1300 sq ft of usable space that can become parks and sites for new buildings. Additionally, by challenging the constraints of the grid we can make even better use of the existing space to bring more density to this area.

Figure 4.1 : Site plan, *opposite,* showcasing the exent of the existing pavement.


E BURNSIDE ST
SANDY BLVD
34'
55'
35'
SE ANKENY ST
SANDY BLVD
SE 11TH AVE
SE 12TH AVE

Cataloging space

One of the first mapping/diagramming exercises that I undertook was to document all of the off street parking and abandoned lots in the area. I initially casted a much wider net by looking three blocks north and south along Burnside from 6th to 24th before zeroing in on the final location. After zooming in on the site I mapped all of the existing building footprints, the on and off street parking and the abandoned lots before creating a map that was just the building footprints in black and all other space left white. With that map I map five iterations of new buildings and greenspaces that represent different approaches to infilling the site.

On these maps blue represents the new building infill, green is greenspaces, and the rust color represents the new paved rights of way. Of these five maps the one that was most exciting was the map that transformed all of Sandy Blvd into a long park. There were several compelling things about this map. The biggest was just the transformation of space from pavement to greenspace. This was exciting in and of itself but was also strong as polemic on the existing condition. Second, the infill strategy that took over 11th street was compelling as it created a nice pocket of density that also made a statement about the amount of pavement in the area. Finally, the meandering paths that replaced the straight shot roads speak to a future that is not in a rush, where people are more inclined to leisure and can slow down as they transit through the city. This map served as the template for future development of the site. The roads would get straightened out a bit but the relative placement of the new buildings and their footprints would stay much the same.

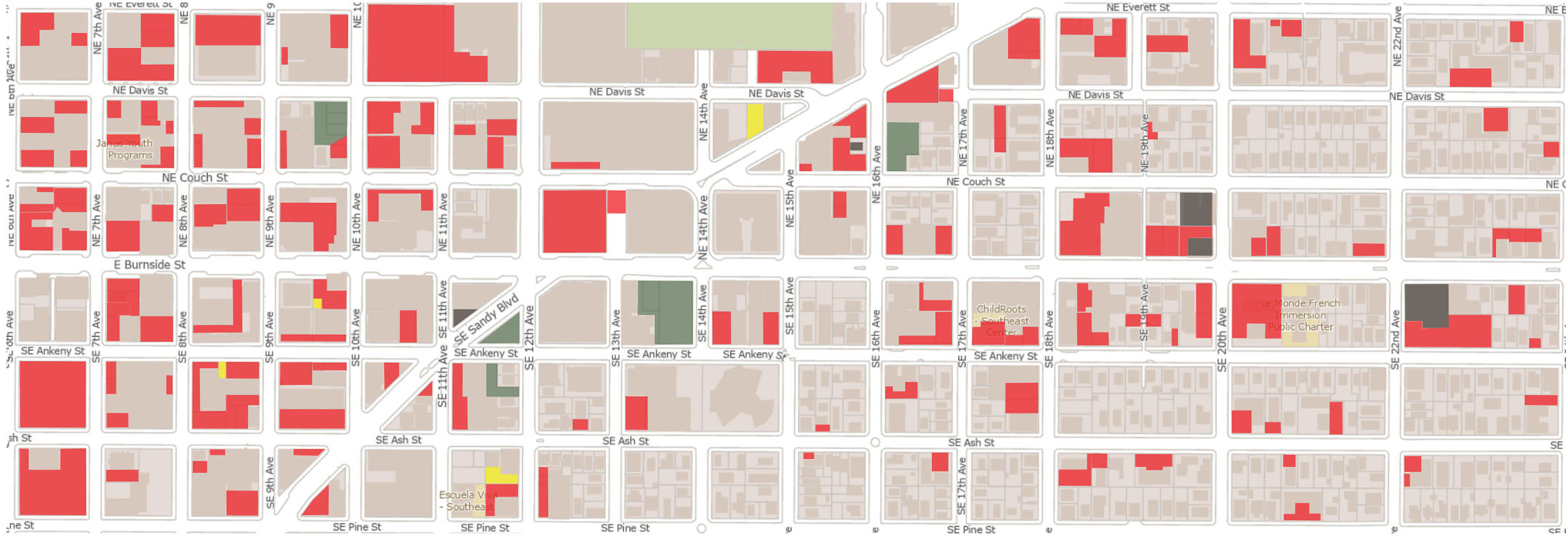


Figure 4.2 : Early site mapping exercise.

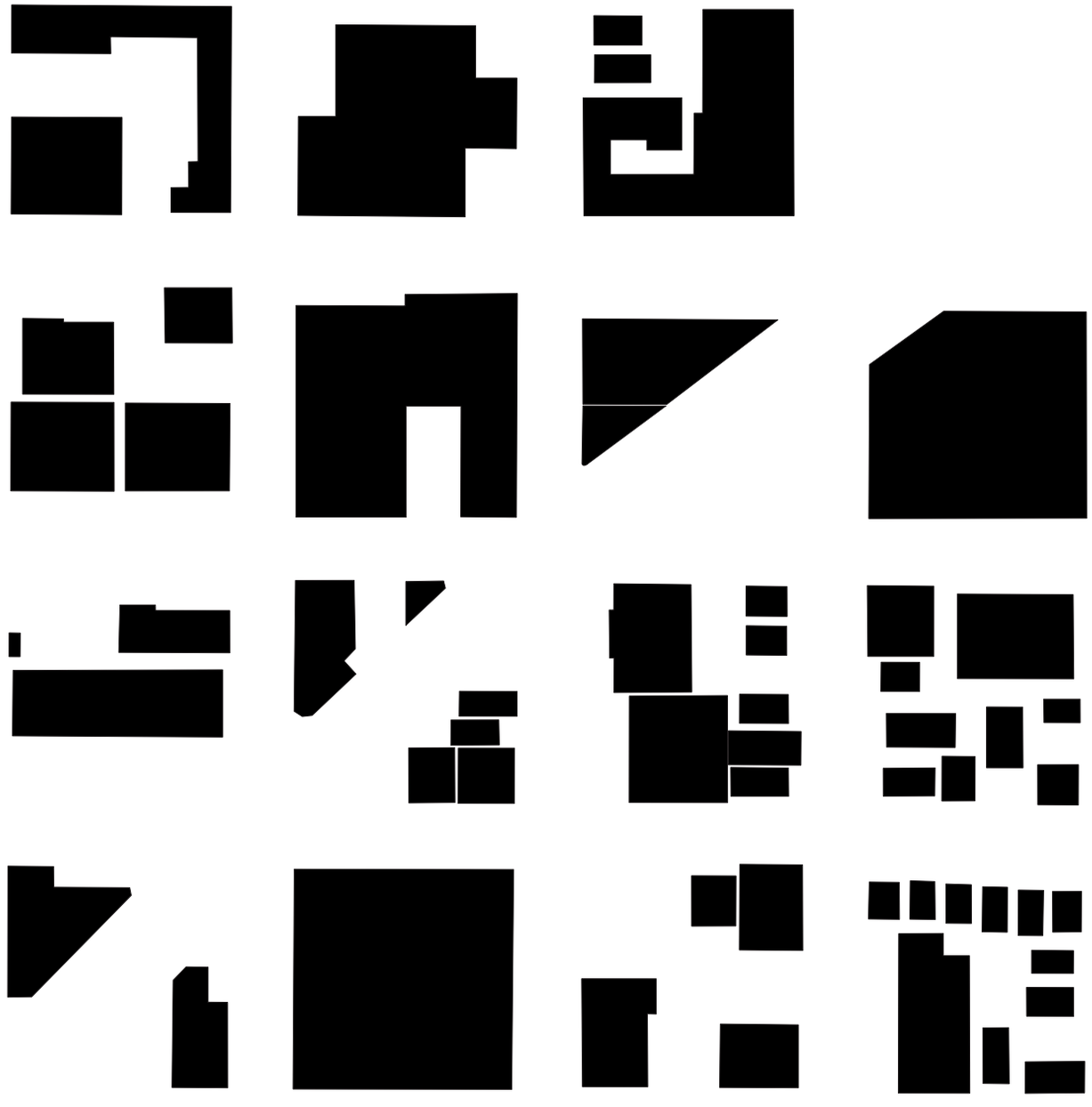
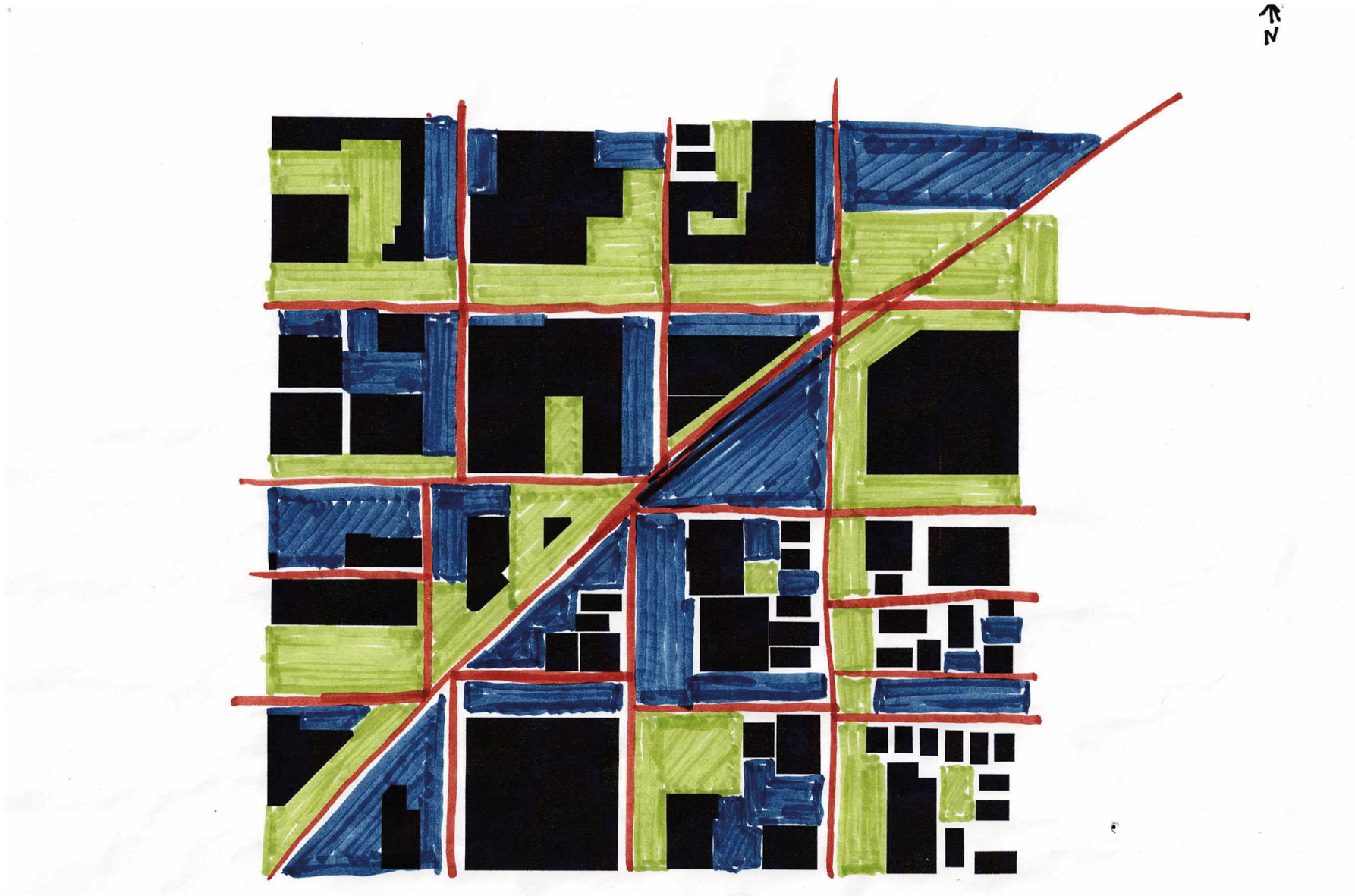


Figure 4.3



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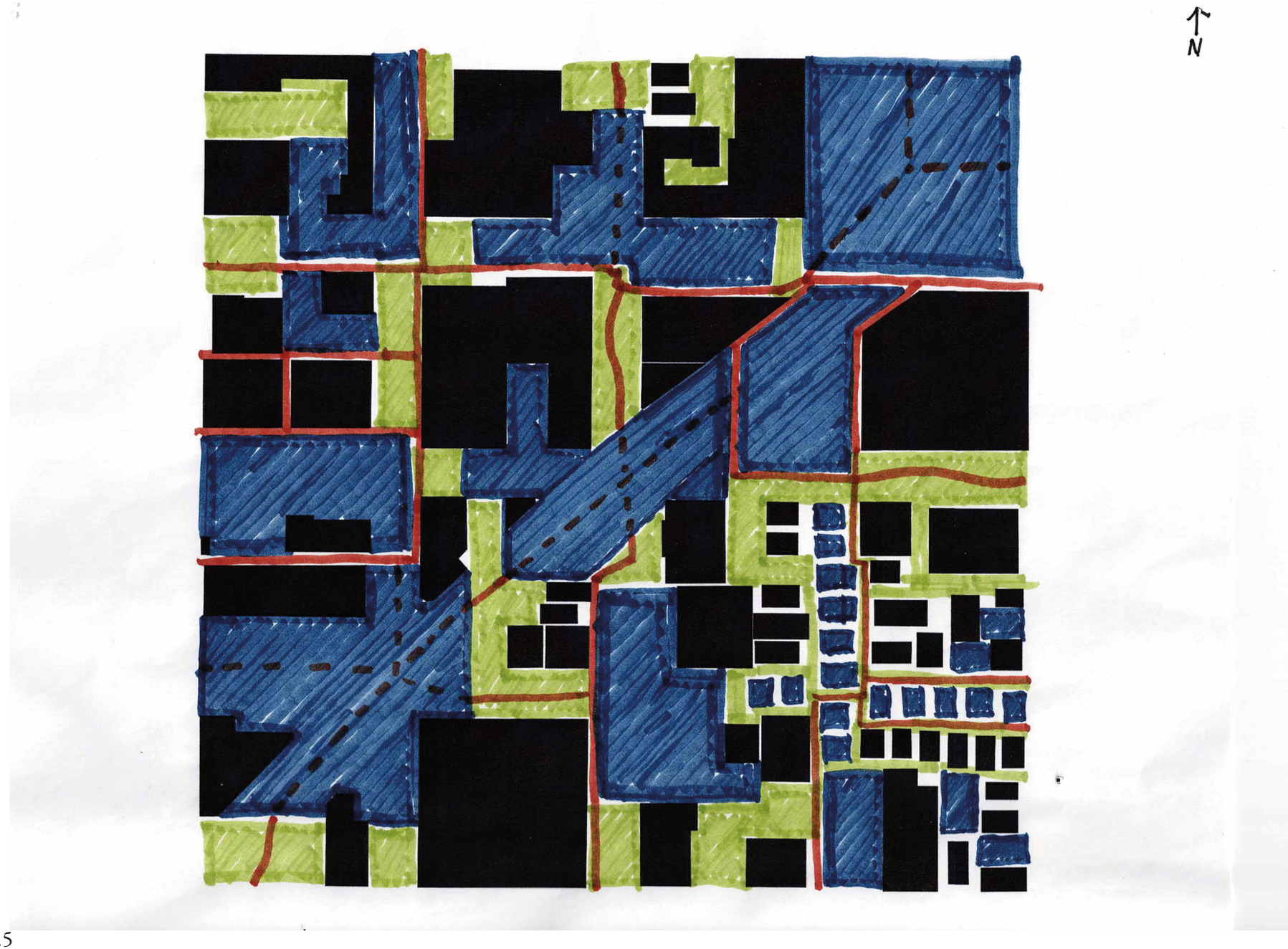


Figure 4.5

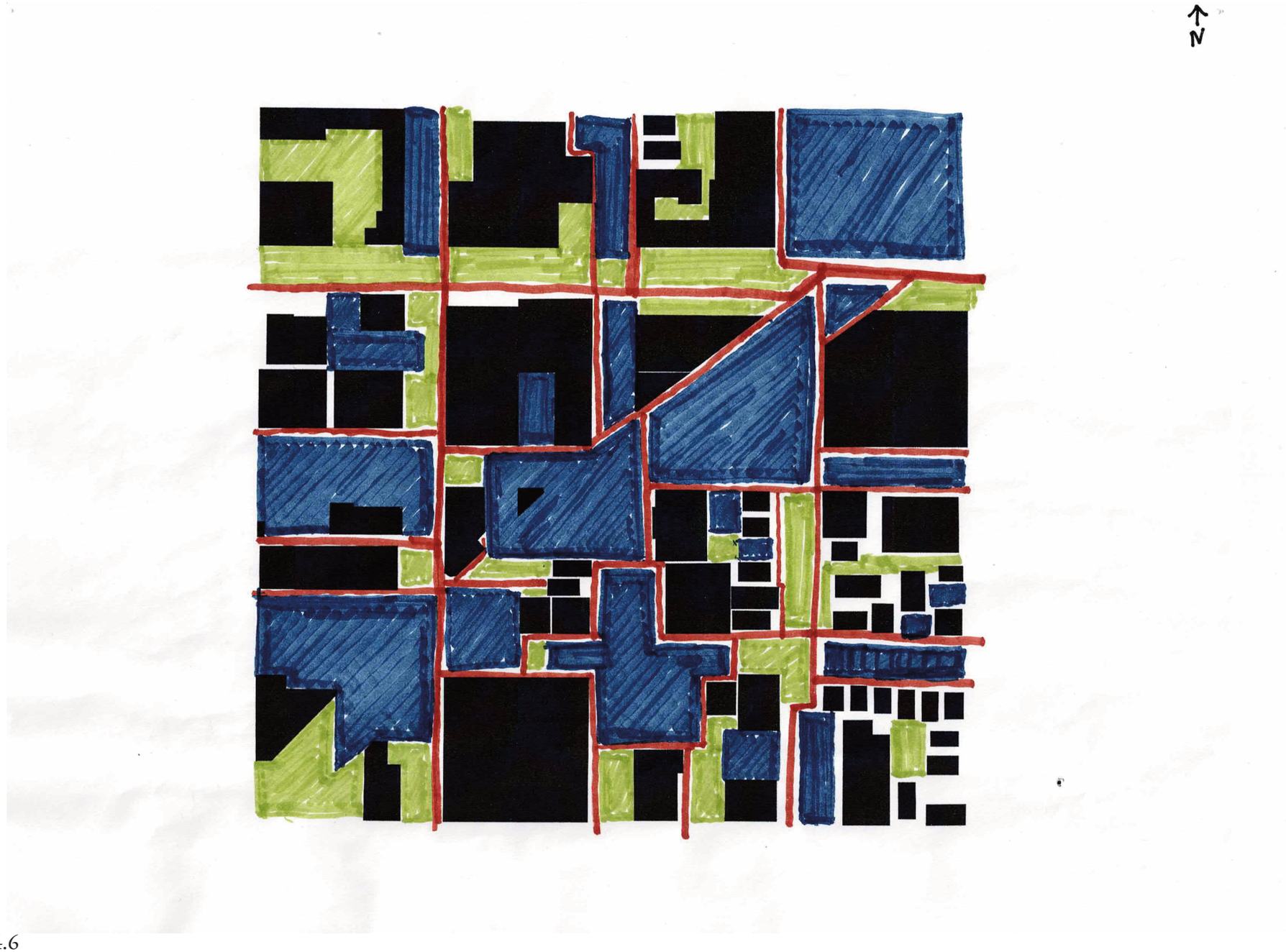


Figure 4.6

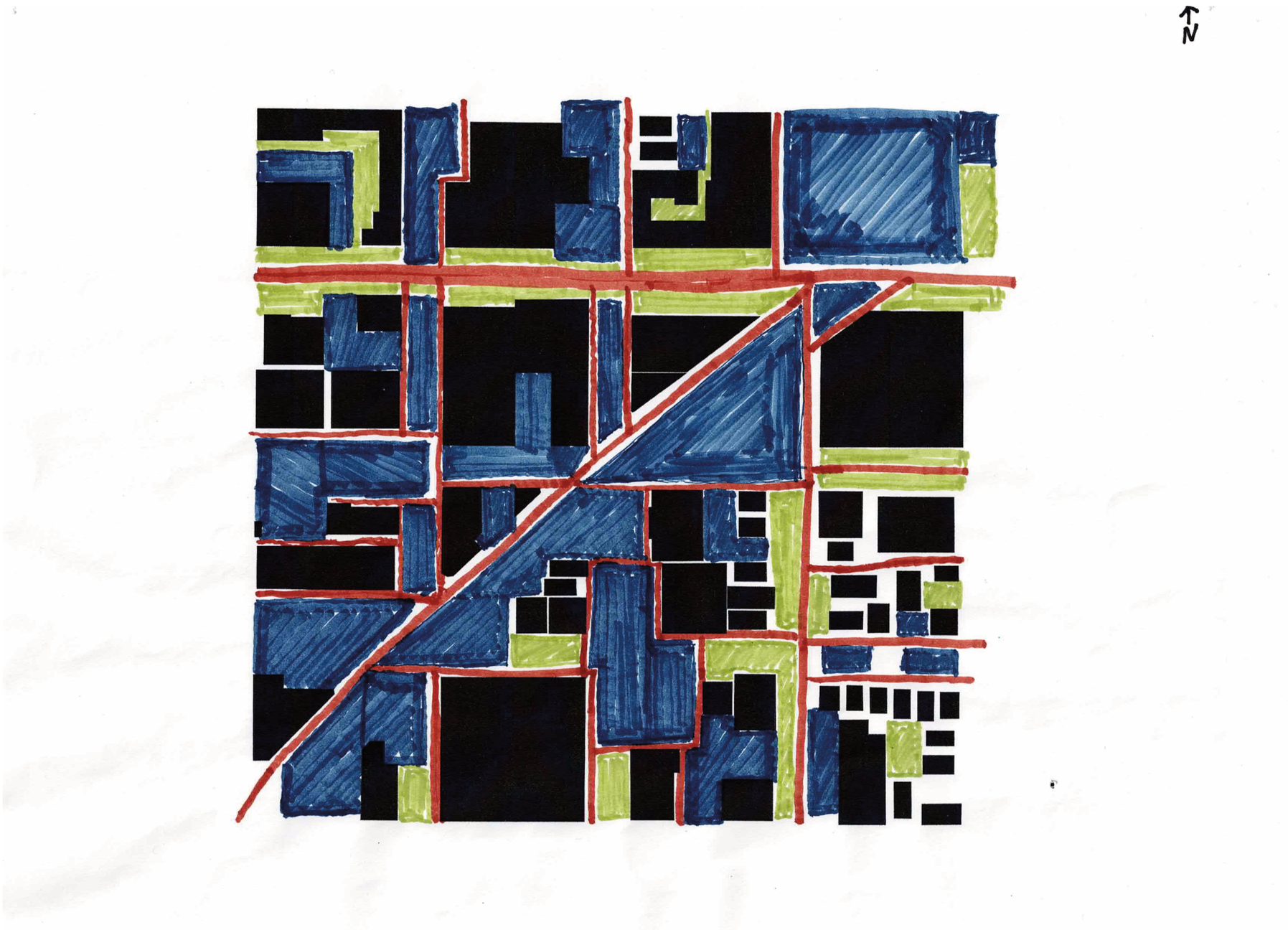


Figure 4.7

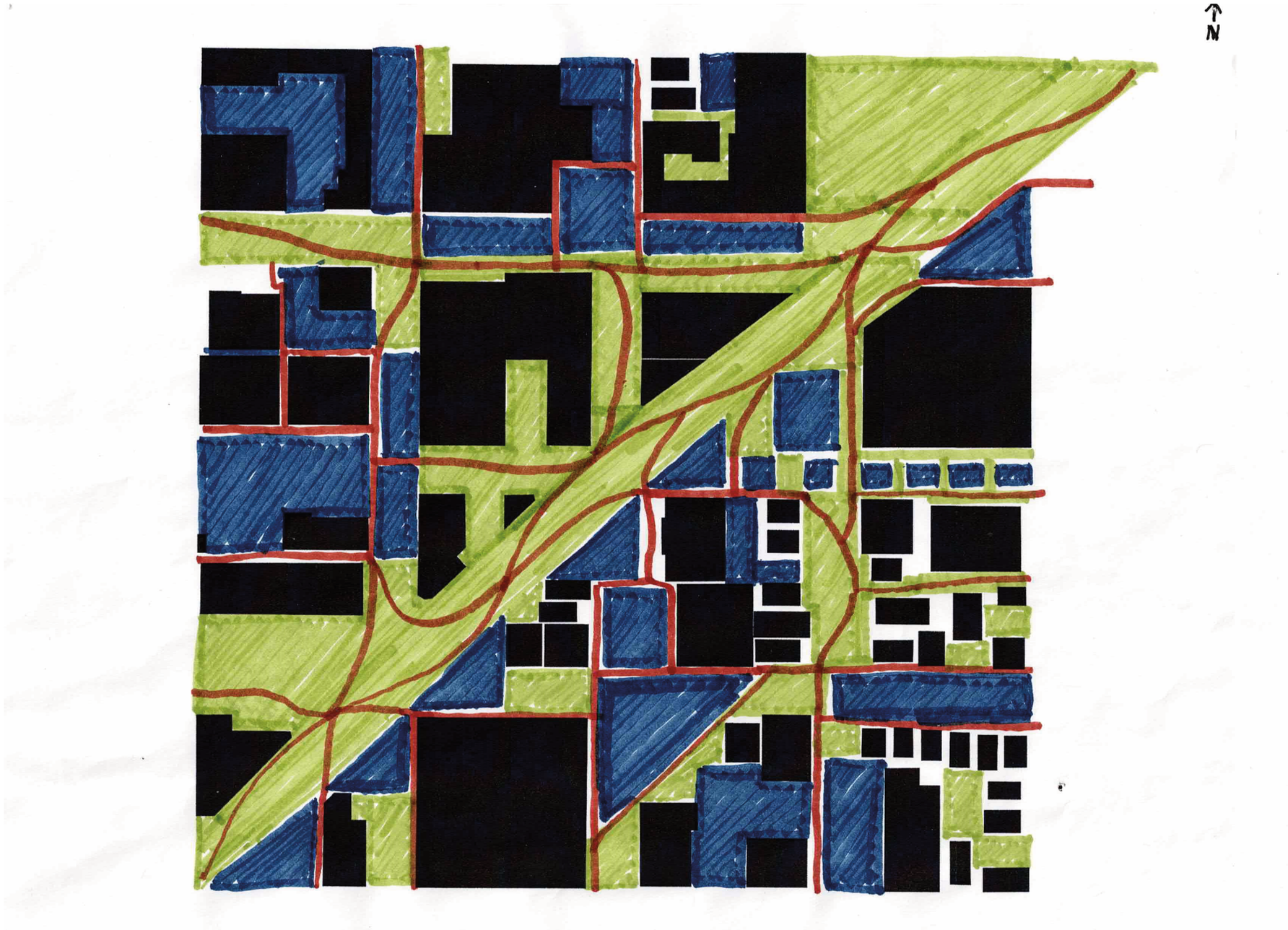
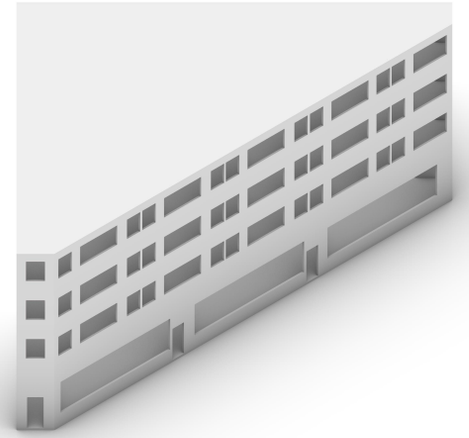


Figure 4.8

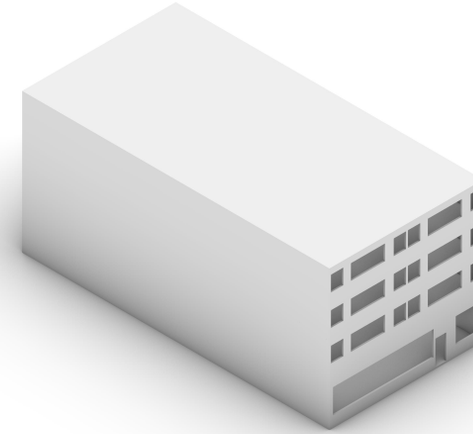
Iteration of intervention

Buildings: The form of the buildings was largely driven by need to infill the site. The most notable form that became central to my design proposal was the triangle typology. This was one of the features of Sandy Blvd that initially drew me to it. Along the length of the boulevard there are a number of buildings that have these narrow angles that respond to the diagonal cut through the grid. They create moments of fun and break up the normal urban fabric. Thus I wanted to carry that typology forward in my proposal to carry on some of the playfulness that they create. Additionally, as an infill strategy they allowed me to maintain the rough contours of the existing street that would then become a park. One path that I began down but did not explore very far was how to experiment with this typology. The library building, which I placed south of the existing intersection, has a sawtooth facade to break up the long, Sandy facing facade and the community hall which is across Sandy from the library has an overhanging second story that creates a ground level arcade reminiscent of those on Burnside. The co-op grocery building has a curved overhang on the Sandy facade to shelter people from the rain or provide shade and is clad in wood slats to create a more dynamic and playful facade. All of these represent full design projects in their own right but gesture to the variations that would be possible.

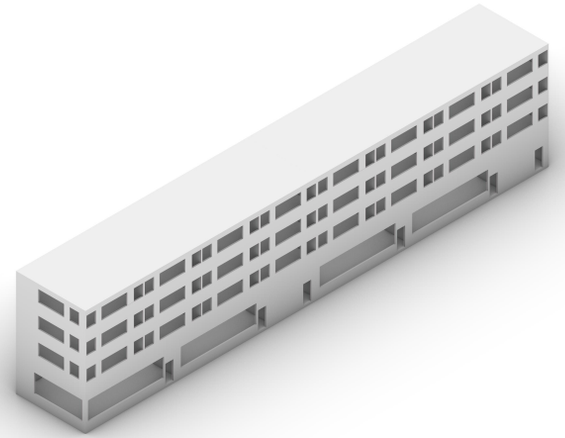
Programming is as important to this thesis as the form of the architecture. Since I wanted to propose not just a set of masses that make the space denser but a series of amenities and services that would be necessary for the sustainability of the neighborhood. The first two pieces of programming were housing and a place to get food. The thinking behind housing is fairly straightforward, there is a need for housing in the city and one of the goals of this plan is to increase density in the central city. The grocery co-op was born out of a need for someplace to get staple food items in this area. This co-op would be necessary for convenience and would be a key service for ensuring the long term viability of this neighborhood. The co-op also features a deli space that would serve quick meals like sandwiches to increase the ground level activation of the building. Next, the library is a response to the recent closure of the neighborhood Multnomah County Library branch. This new branch would bring back that critical service to the area and, in addition to books, would lend a variety of items as has become typical of libraries throughout the state. Across from the library, the community meeting hall gives the residents of this neighborhood the space to engage in debate, policy making, and any other meetings they might need to have. A more robustly democratic society will require space in addition to time in order for people to speak their minds and engage with proposals, thus this space gives the people of Buckman a dedicated place to do that. There is also a pharmacy south of Ankeny on 12th St, which is another service that the neighborhood is currently lacking. The remaining spaces are programmed for various types of provisioning, such as restaurants and thrift stores and spaces for studios for arts and crafts. The program is explored through the placement of furniture and some interior walls within the floor plans, but further iteration would explore how these programs would bring more specificity to the designs.



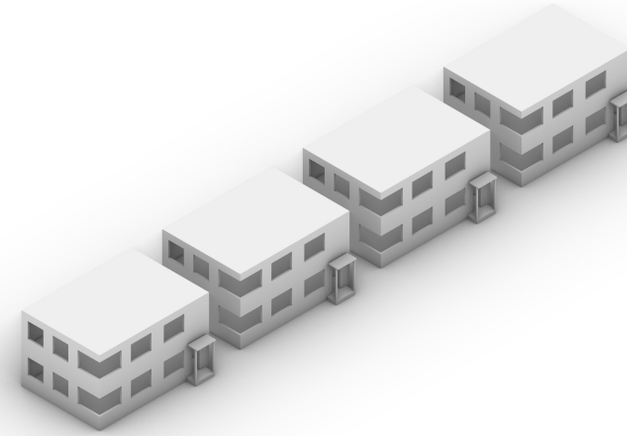
“Triangle”: The Triangle type is the idiosyncratic consequence of the diagonal intersection. It is primarily proposed to infill lots along diagonal RoWs but may also be use creatively to introduce diagonal cuts to blocks. This type should be between 3-10 stories. The form should be roughly a right triangle, with the A and B sides being no longer than 100’ each. The angles a and b are encouraged to be chamfered. The hypotenuse may break from being a straight line where it faces a large open area.



“Box”: this is the most conventional typology as it merely the form for infilling existing blocks. Thus, at its most basic, it is a simply rectangular prism. The box type slots into the existing fabric seamlessly by just replacing a surface lot or brownfield that is itself the vestige of a former “box”. However, in theory, the box could be deployed in a more radical fashion where there is significant urban space. The box is ideally 3-10 stories depending on need and context. The box’s dimensions are not fixed but a footprint of 100’ x 100’ is should be considered a soft limit, after which point multiple discrete “boxes” should be considered.

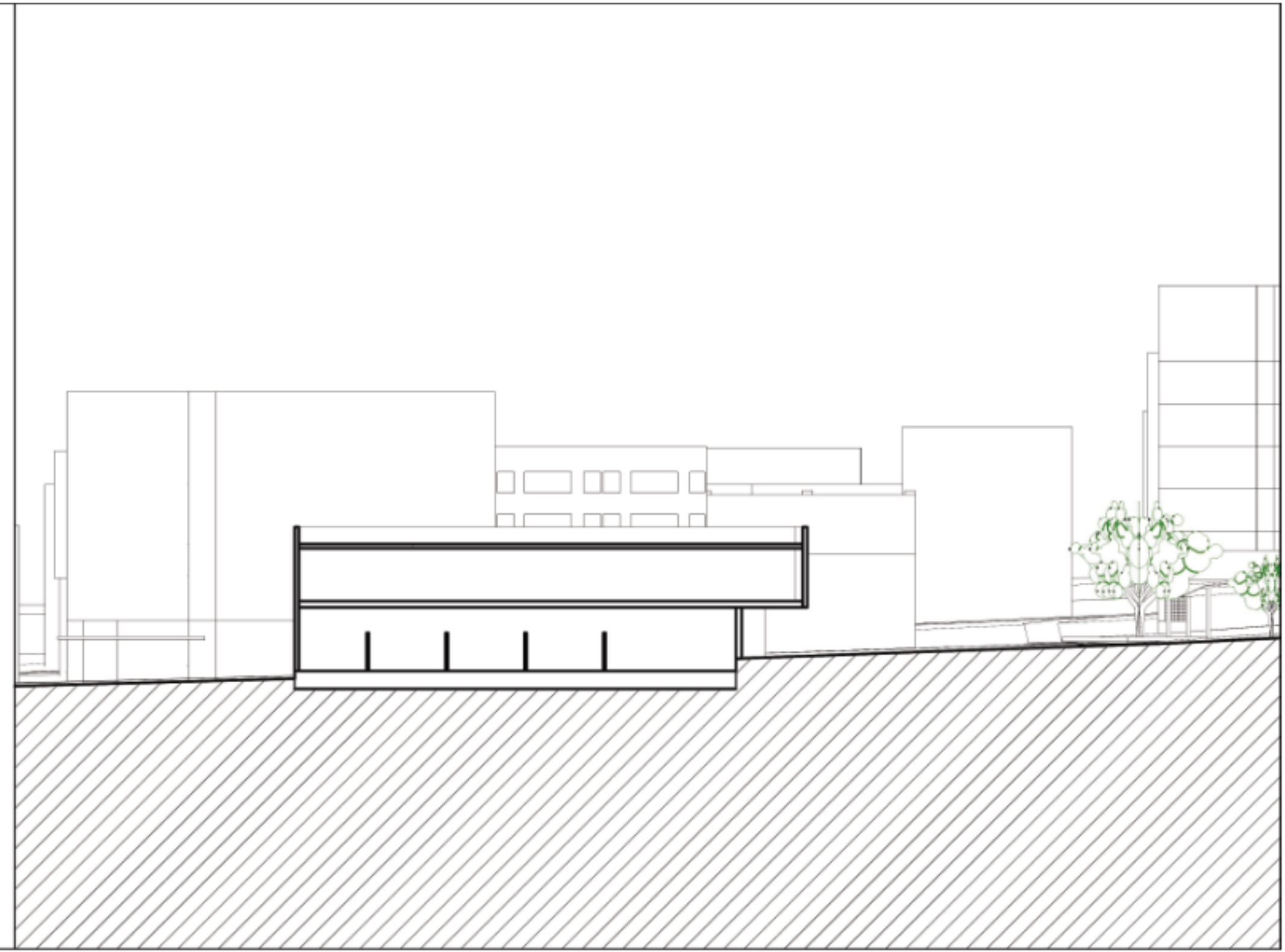


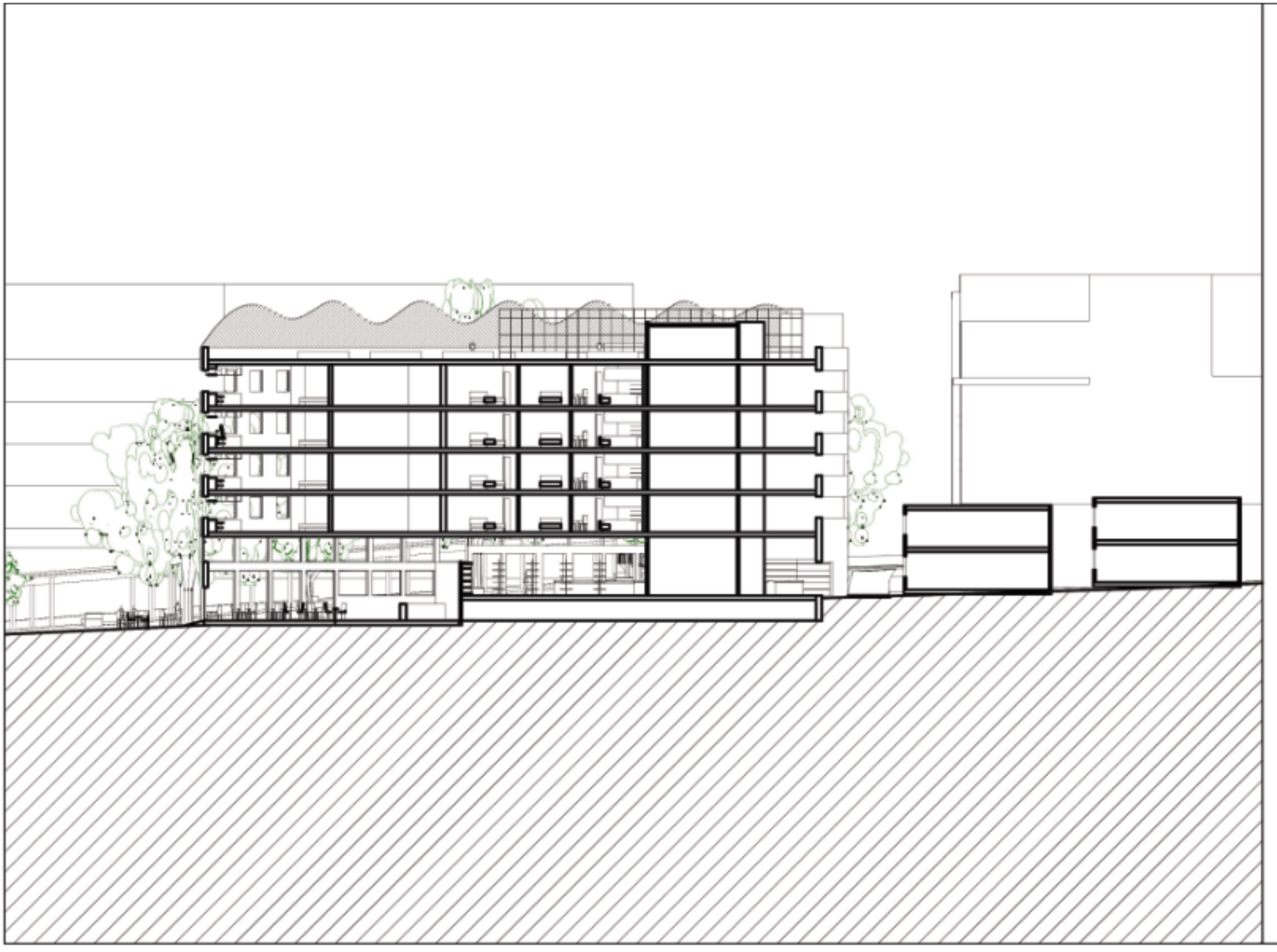
“Bar”: this type is suggested to infill the linear right of ways which have been deemed extraneous. The Bar is best suited for conditions where the right of way is greater than 35’ in width and where the need for density has been carefully considered. In a sense the bar’s function is to the infill the street as to connect two blocks or to lengthen one. The bar should ideally be 3-10 stories, with 3 being an absolute minimum. The length should not exceed 200’ as to not become oppressive to the landscape. Finally, the depth will depend on the RoW width but will most likely not exceed 50’, with 30’-50’ being advised.



“Broken Bar”: The Broken Bar consists of a row of linearly placed, discrete structures. Like the bar this type is aimed at infilling RoWs but reflects the need for a lower impact version. The spacing between units can range from 0’ to 20’ with the later being an absolute maximum. The units should be between 2-3 stories, with no need for uniformity on a given row. Depth will be between 20’-40’ with width following the same guidelines.

Figure 4.9: A break down of several building typologies and their roles in infill strategies that were considered during my designing.





Hardscaping: Since depaving was one of the initial watchwords of this thesis I wanted to be very intentional about the type of pavement that I would have on the site. I proposed two basic treatments: smooth pavement, most likely some form of asphalt, and pavers. The smooth pavement is still optimal for bicycles, wheelchairs, and other light vehicles to have a smooth ride, especially at a decent speed. However, these vehicles are significantly lighter and smaller than cars and thus require less pavement. I envision that many deliveries, such as bread from a local bakery or last mile shipping, would be made by cargo bike as is already becoming increasingly commonplace in Portland and many other cities around the world. These paths would be no wider than 12' to ensure that riders have comfortable space to pass each other, but not so wide as to create dead spaces and significant heat islands. The rest of the hardscaping in front of buildings and for slower paths would be done with pavers. Pavers have many advantages over the asphalt and concrete that dominate our contemporary public spaces. First, they create a permeable surface which mitigates disastrous storm runoff and even allows for some greenery to poke up depending on the type of stones used. Additionally, they are cheaper, less labor intensive, and less disruptive to repair, since only a few pavers need to be removed for service instead of ripping up a whole section of road that will need to be repaved. Also, the rougher quality of the surface acts as natural traffic calming forcing wheeled vehicles to slow down for a smoother ride. Finally, they have an esthetic quality to them that is far more inviting than a large patch of concrete or asphalt.

Greenspaces: Of the iterations that I produced to show the possibilities that could inhabit this site, the one that spoke to me the most was the map that shows Sandy Blvd converted into a great linear park. All of this new greenspace would be a much needed space for play and relaxation. Local residents would no longer have a noisy, dangerous street but instead a right size path and ample vegetation. The benefits to mental and physical health would be immense. This would also send a strong message that Portland is committed to its values of ample parks and human spaces as well as the city's claims towards building environmental justice. Depaving and creating new, or restoring old, greenspaces would begin to erode the distinction between urban and natural. I used the word "stewardship" to describe this thesis and that word has a lot of currency regarding the "environment", which is seen as separate from the human world of the city. However, the city is an environment and is also a part of a much larger environment. I seek to break down the distinction between forests of trees and forests of buildings and bring our built world into much closer contact with our non human neighbors. In order to further facilitate this I am proposing spaces that are not human focused like the more conventional park space but to create space for other forms of life in the site. Currently, these take the form of bioswales, a very familiar Portland typology, but ideally they would take on other, less rigid forms as well.

Finally, I designed a few outdoor interventions that would serve different needs for the community. The first is a long covered structure that runs alongside the Sandy pathway and creates a space for outdoor activities such as clothing swaps, tabling events, busking, chess, etc. The roof is v-shaped to create a channel that would follow the incline of the site and deposit rainwater in a bioswale located at the central intersection. There is also a foundation and small basin that is designed to reflect the columnar basalt formations of the Columbia Gorge and provide the area with a more sculptural piece. Finally, there is a small playground for children to play on. I think that there are more opportunities for these types of interventions and if there are future iterations of this project that would be a key area of exploration.

Figure 5.15: Midterm iteration of site plan, *opposite*.

Site Map
Scale: 1/32" = 1' - 0"

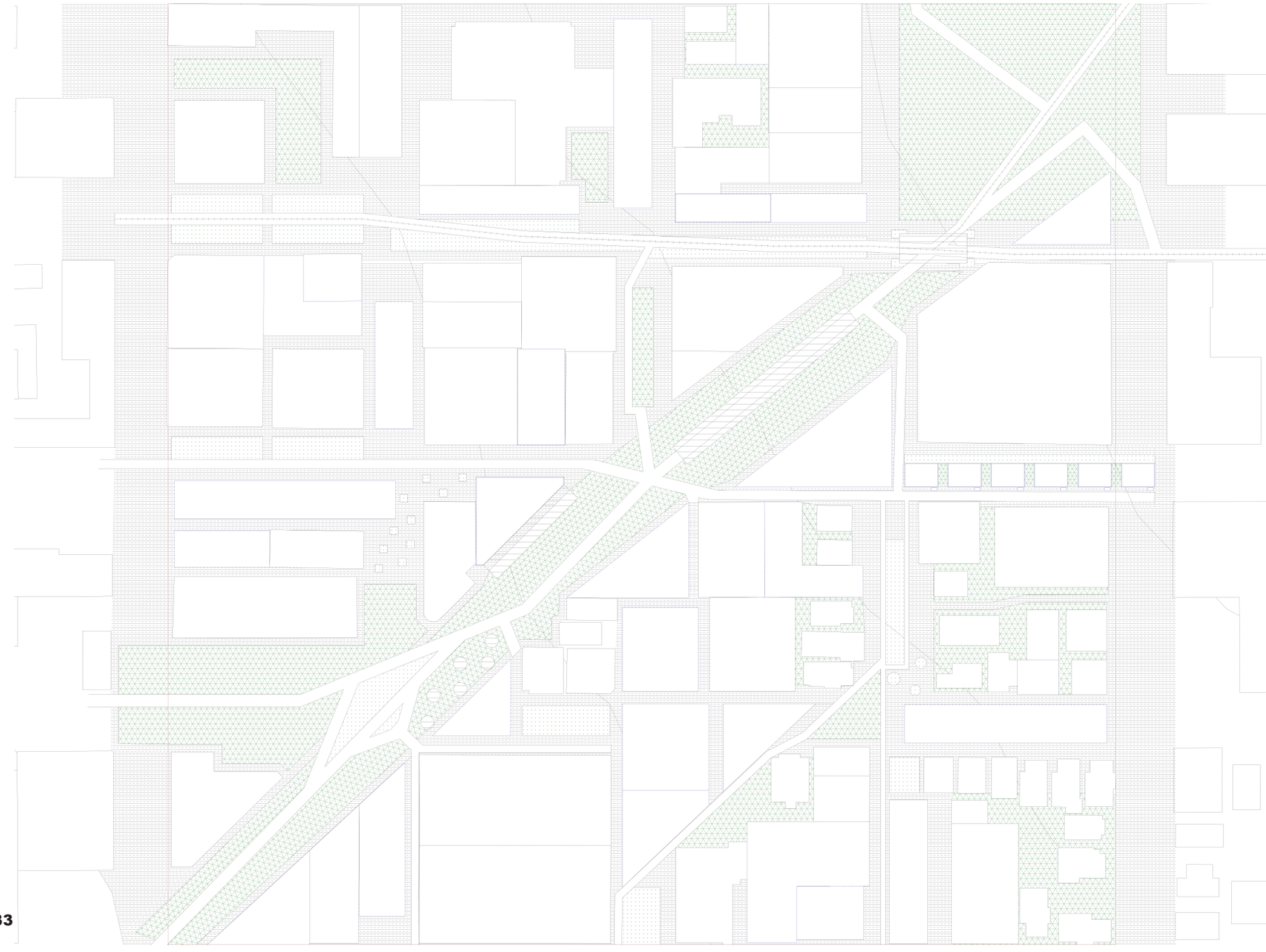
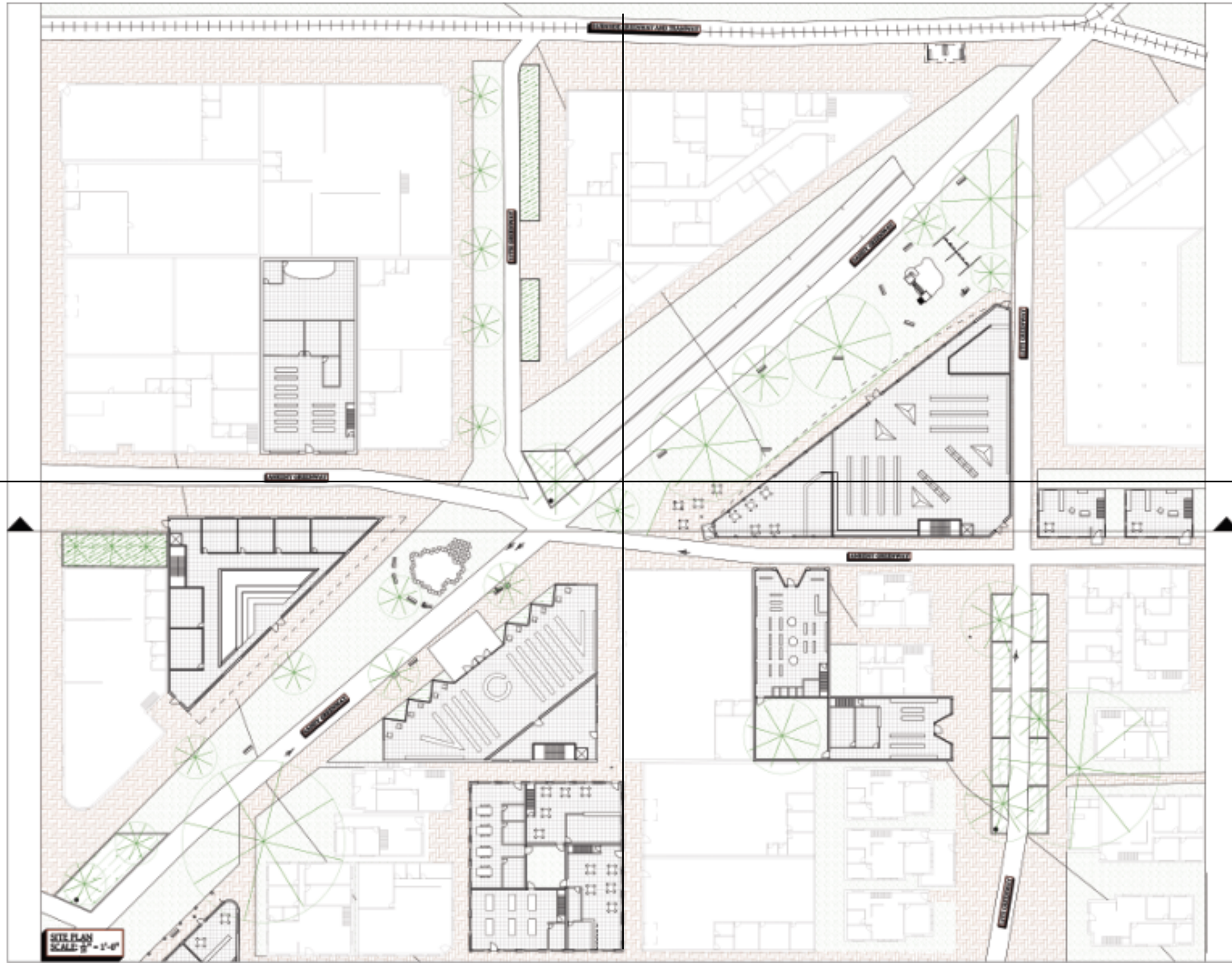
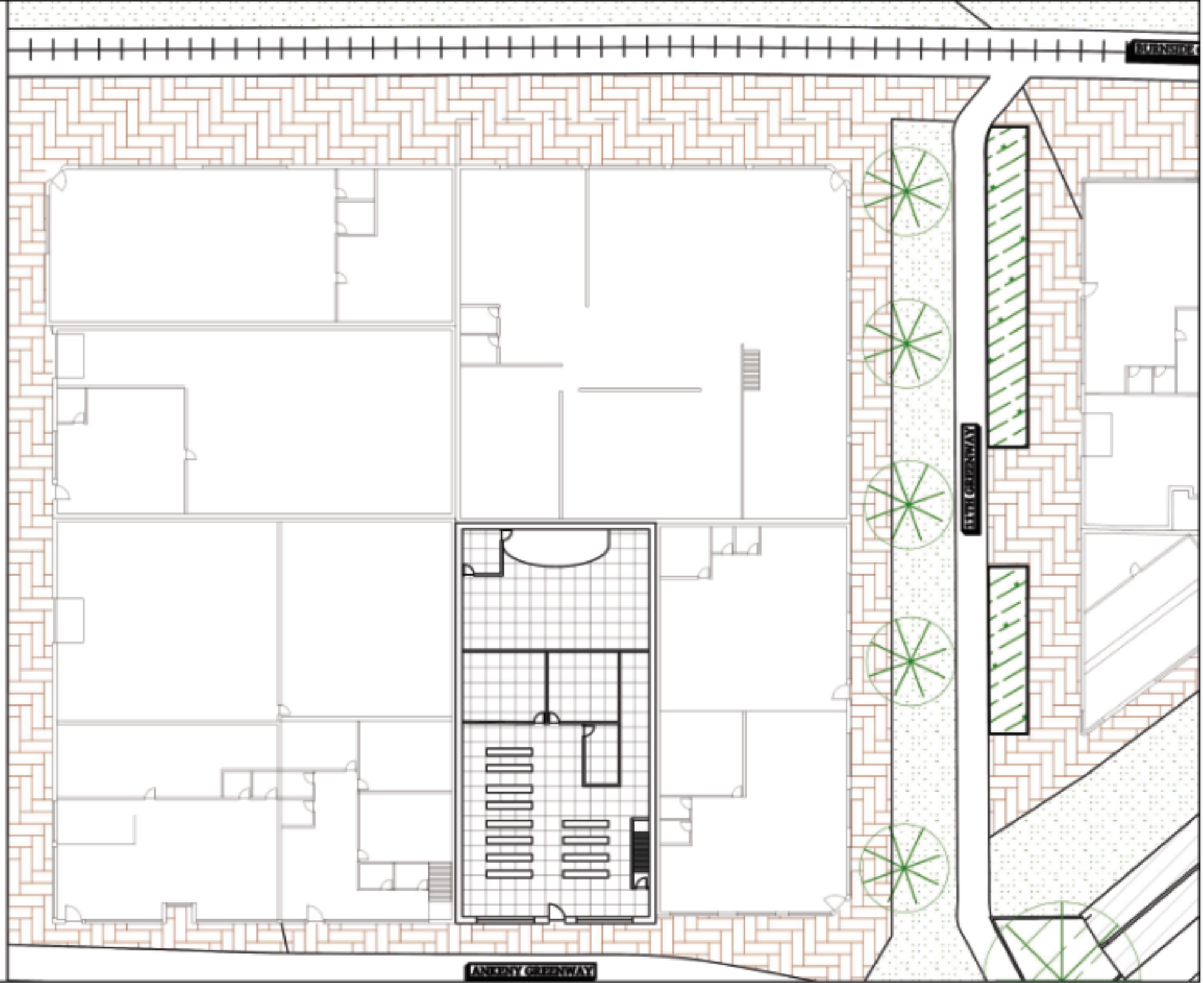
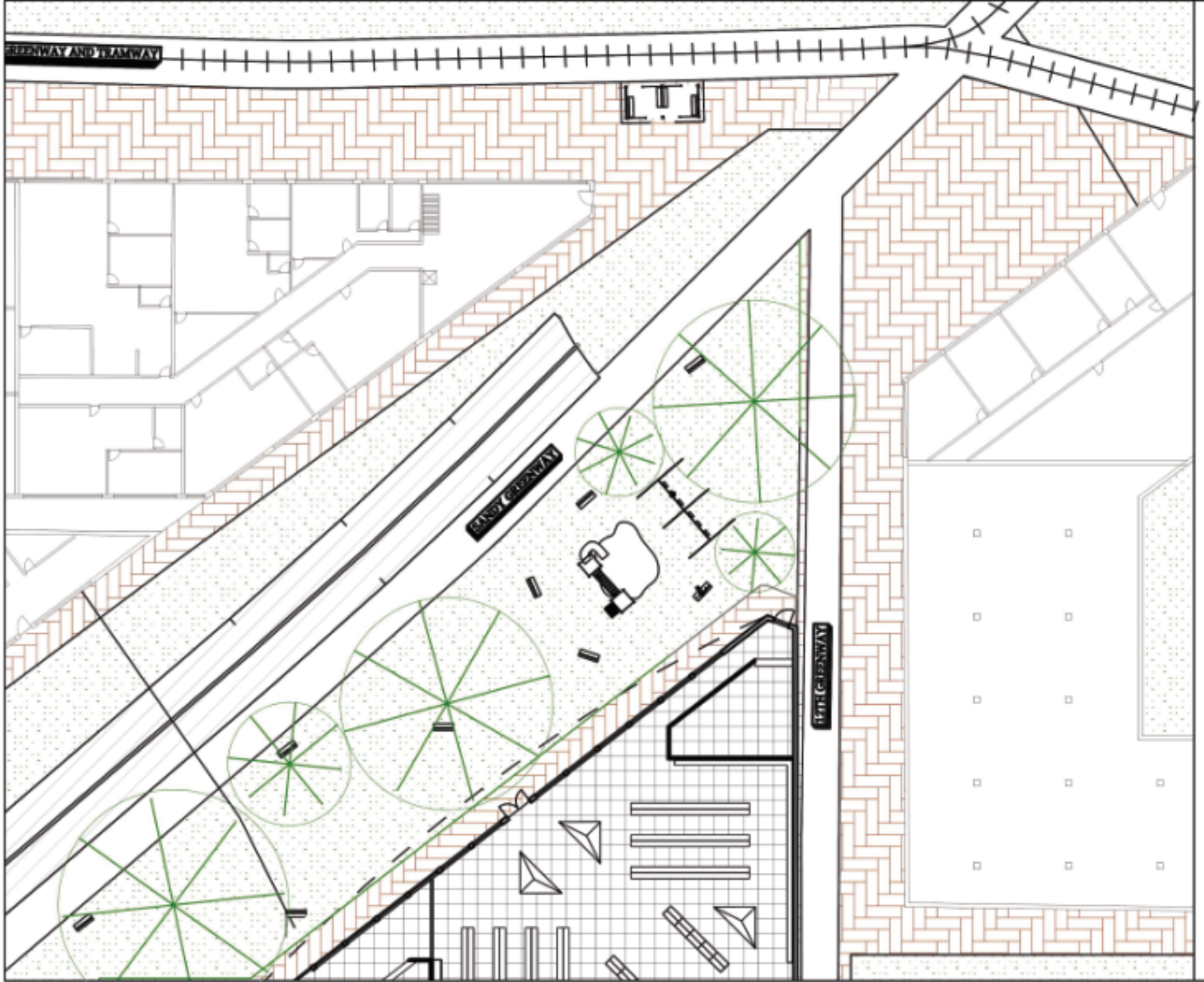


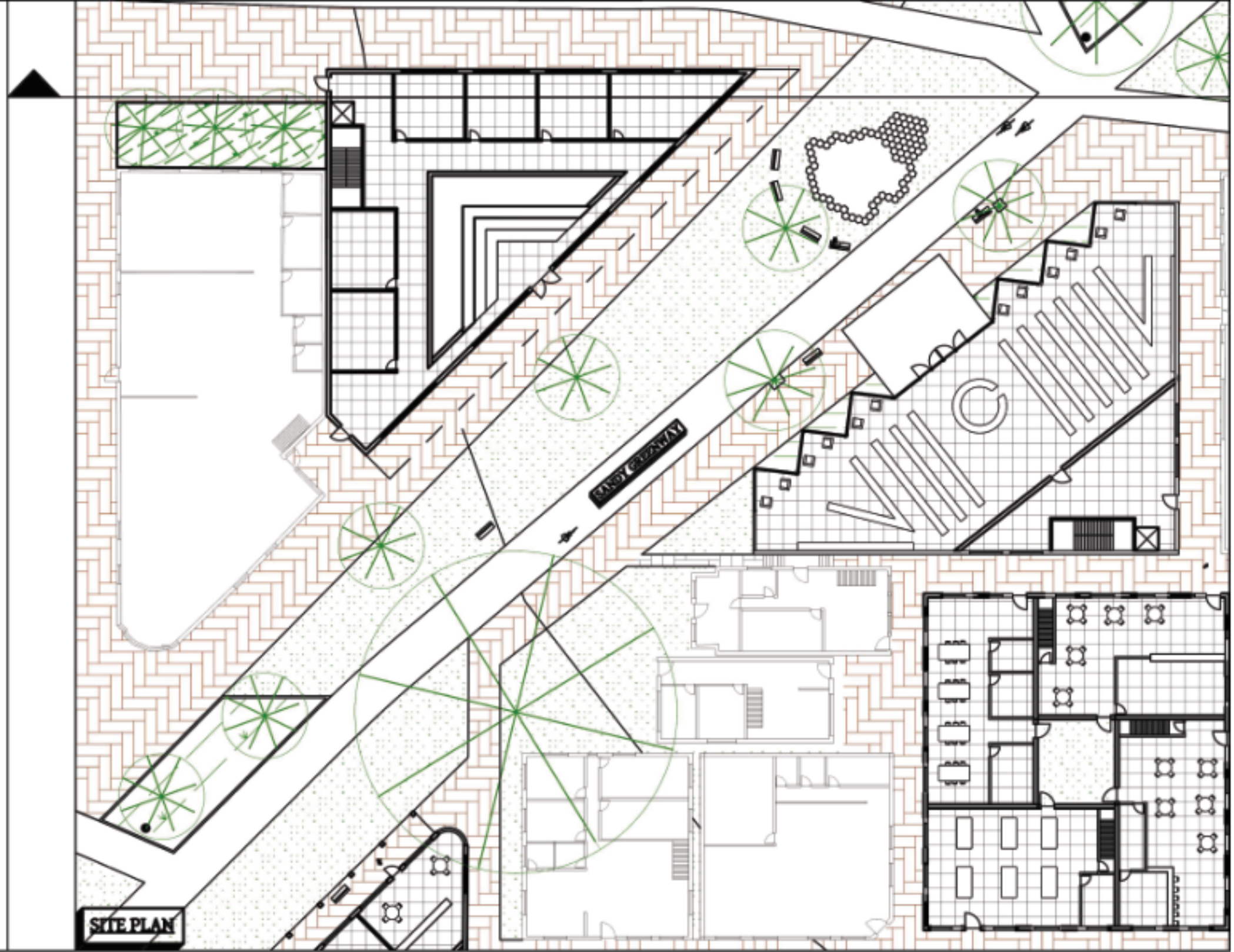
Figure 5.16: A later interation of the site plan, *opposite,* which reflect my early experimentation with the graphical language for this thesis.

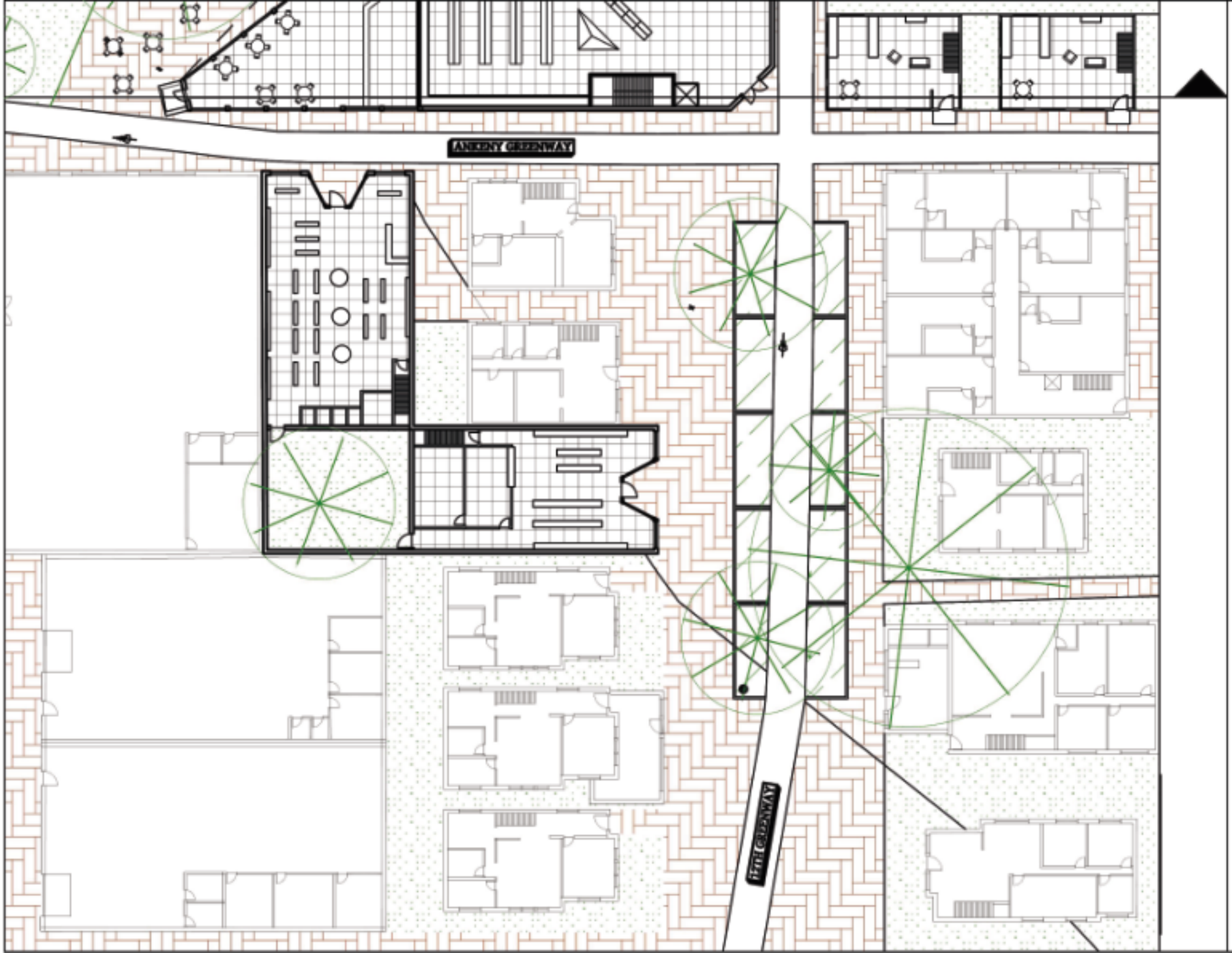
Figures 5.17: Final site plan, *opposite*. This image is marked with lines to denote where the drawing was cut for the following spreads
Figures 5.18-5.21: These drawings follow on pages 37-40, they provide a larger format for the site plan to express detail.


SITE PLAN
SCALE: 1" = 1'-0"


RUDDOCK
ANCENY GREENWAY


GREENWAY AND TRAMWAY
SANDY GREENWAY
MANNERS-GREEN


SITE PLAN


ANDERSON GREENWAY
14TH GREENWAY

Critique of Political Economy

Social Provision of Housing

Housing is one of the critical sectors where the market has failed miserably. Not only has housing become increasingly unaffordable but it is also increasingly atomizing and isolating. Thus I have explored alternatives to the market for provisioning housing and offer some thoughts about how this could work in practice. Of interest to me are community land trusts, cohousing, and social housing. Each is interesting in their own right and I believe can be combined to create a new type of housing commons that is not at the mercy of the speculative market.

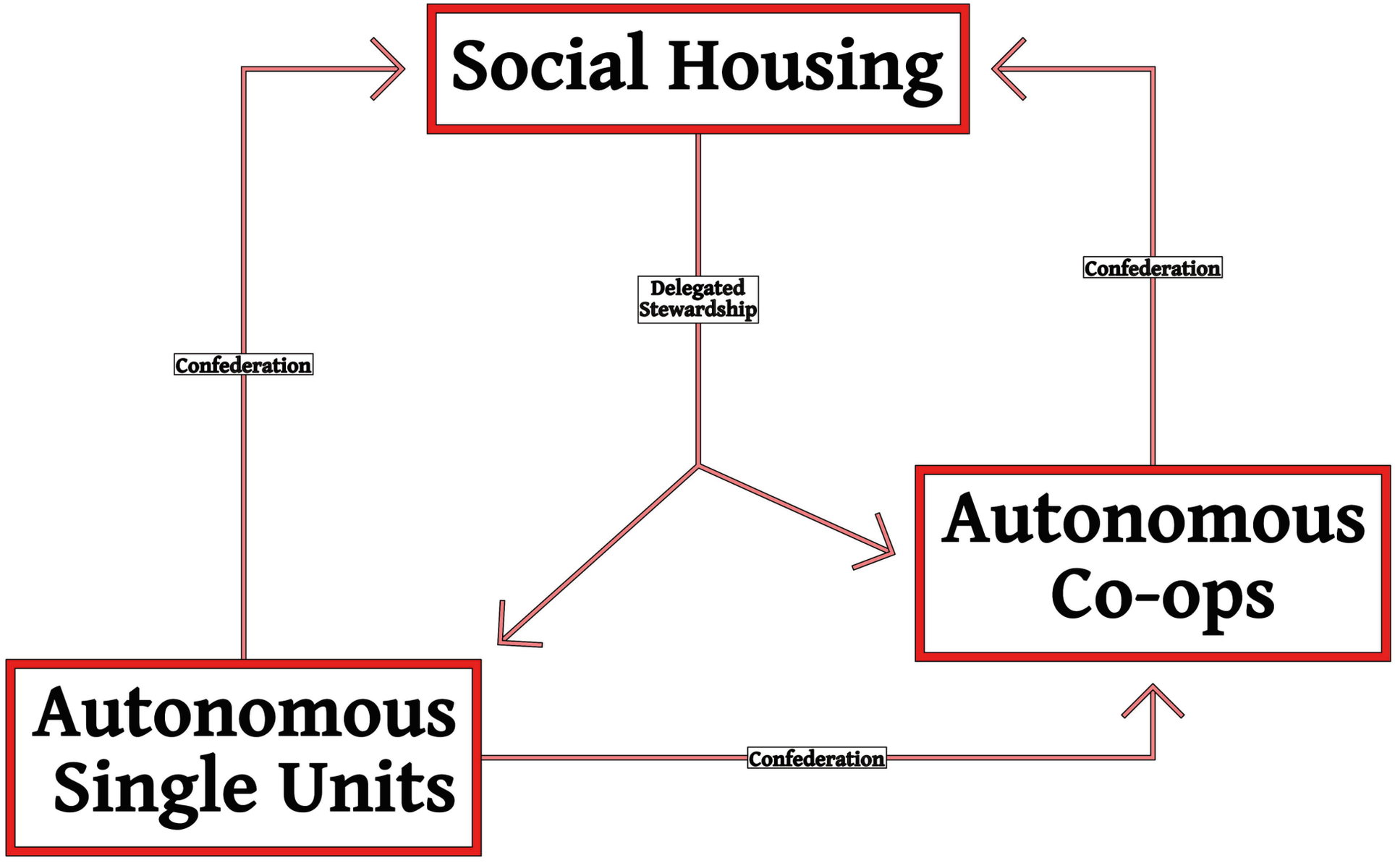
Land trusts are a form of land ownership where land is held in a legal trust and as a result can not be sold without the consent of the trust's board. More specifically, community land trusts are arrangements designed to create community control over land and have been an effective strategy for guarding against displacement from rising property values and economic downturns. Land trusts are said to have a "counter cyclical" effect on property value and speculation. That is to say they prevent prices from rising too high in a boom market and insulate against people losing their homes in a bust market. Thus, community land trusts are a good counter to speculative and individualized land ownership.

Cohousing is a broad term for a variety of different cooperative housing strategies and arrangements. Ownership is typically distributed amongst the residents in some capacity but this can range from equal stakes to a homeowners association with some joint property that all residents are bought into. The key feature of cohousing is the presence of some type of shared space that serves as a focal point for a more communal living arrangement. A shared common house that hosts regular group meals and large gardens are typical examples. Additionally, cohousing collectives will have shared responsibilities for maintenance of shared spaces and making decisions about improvements and other administrative matters. Cohousing provides an example of housing that is based around community and shared responsibility.

Social housing is housing that is owned and operated by a government or government proxy not for financial gain but for the good of the community. Social housing has come to replace the term public housing among many American activists in part to rebrand from a term that carries social stigma. However, the embrace of the term social housing is also a reflection of advocates' desire to emulate the successes of the Viennese social housing model which has served the citizens of the Austrian capital for over a century. Two aspects that are impressive are that nearly two thirds of the city lives in social housing and thus there is no stigma around and the second is that rents are capped to 11% of the tennent's income. As such social housing is an example of treating housing a social good and not a commodity that guarantees that the citizens of a city, state, or country have the right to housing.

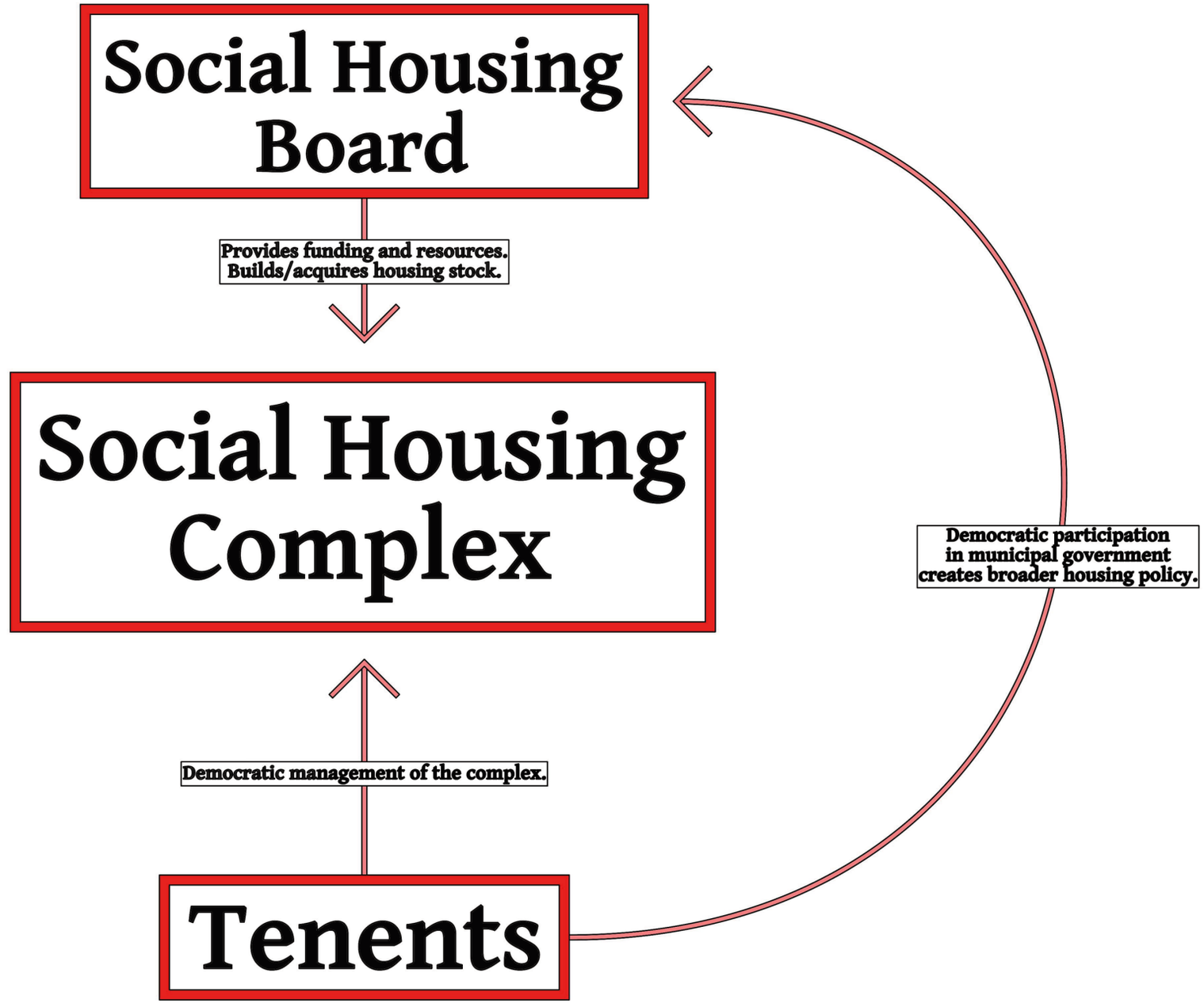
I do not believe that any one of these arrangements is the perfect solution to the present housing crisis but rather that the long term solution to speculative land ownership and the commodification of our city lies in a combination of several approaches. While social housing represents the need for a large-scale redistributive approach, land trusts and cohousing are models for a more bottom up and decentralized approach. As I will discuss later I have strong bias towards

Figure 6.1: *opposite.*


Social Housing
Delegated Stewardship
Confederation
Confederation
Autonomous Co-ops
Autonomous Single Units
Confederation

decentralization as it creates flexibility and resilience while providing an alternative to the often impersonal and alienating centralized, state approaches. In an approach to the flexibility aspect I propose two key concepts, delegated stewardship and confederation. Delegated stewardship would grant social housing boards the ability to place a portion of their housing stock in the care of individuals or cohousing collectives. The goal here is to empower people to make their own decisions about use and maintenance within a framework of collective ownership. The rights to delegated stewardship would be set for a fixed period of time and then when that time has elapsed the residents and the social housing board can renegotiate another lease or return the stock to the care of the board. Conversely, confederation would give individuals and smaller collectives a pathway to pool resources and distribute responsibility of care to a larger group. This could be done by forming a new land trust or joining with an existing social housing board. Furthermore, I believe that the land trust model is complementary to the social housing model in the sense that social housing could be built on land held by a city wide land trust. By placing municipal assets in a land trust that land would be further insulated from market forces and this would create the opportunity for that land to be administered in a more democratic way as opposed to it being the fief of a city bureau. Additionally, that land could be developed to serve other needs. For example, if the city land trust owned 15% of the land in every neighborhood, they could ensure not only housing in every neighborhood but also access to food, medicine, and gathering spaces.

Figure 6.2: *opposite.*


Social Housing Board
Provides funding and resources. Builds/acquires housing stock.
Social Housing Complex
Democratic management of the complex.
Tenents
Democratic participation in municipal government creates broader housing policy.

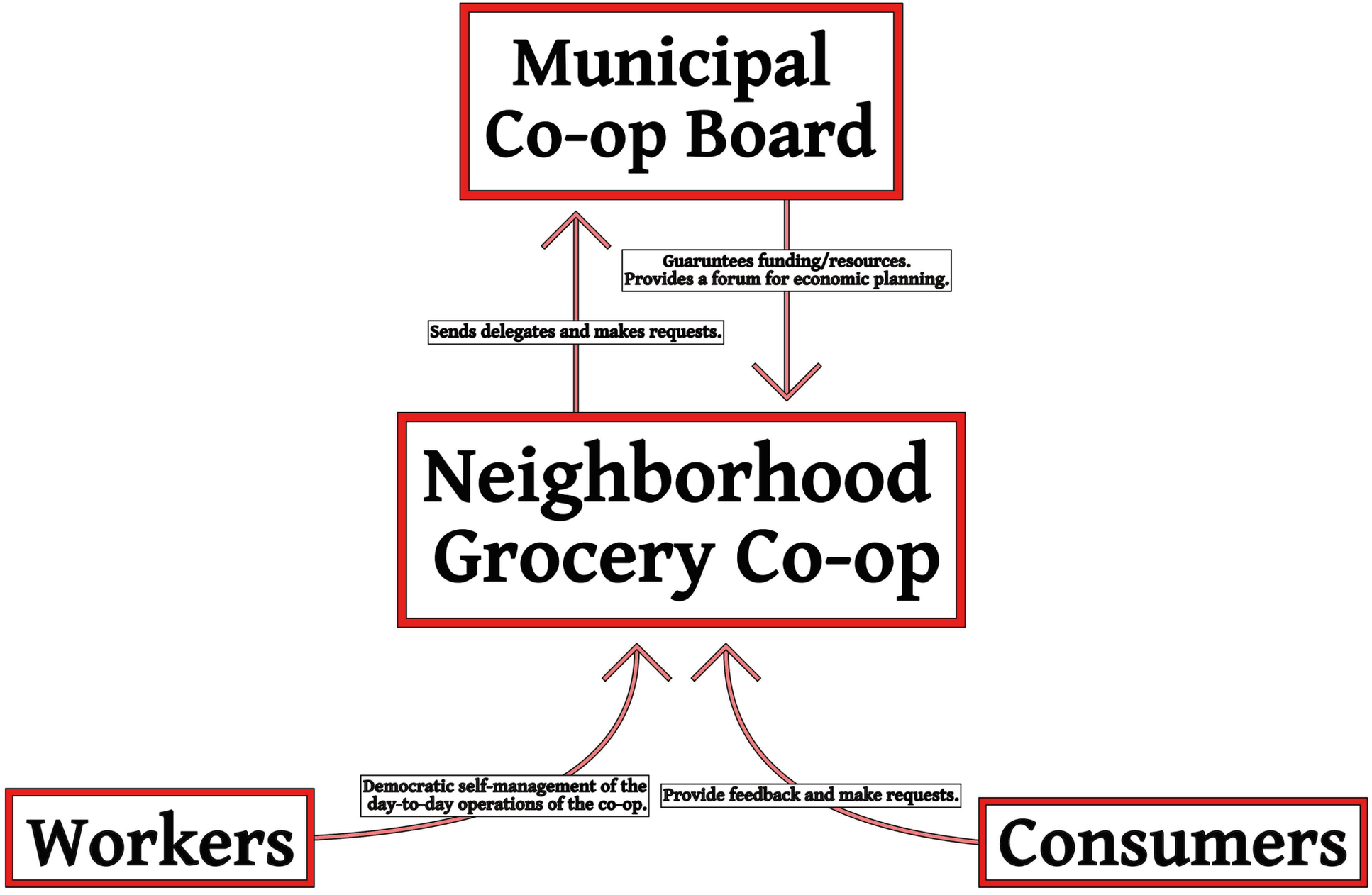
Economic Democracy

When I began to explore socialist theory one of the most convincing arguments that I was presented with was from a lecture given by Dr. Richard Wolff in which he argued "if you believe in democracy then you should believe in democracy in the workplace." I often recount this as a moment of instant conversion, although it was probably more complicated than that. Suffice to say that I found this an extremely compelling argument and it has influenced my approach to political economy for the last decade. I believe that the ideal society is a democratic one which does not simply mean one person, one vote but instead refers to a society built on consent and collective decision making. In the case of economics it means that workers should make decisions about how their workplace is run, tennents should make decisions about the administration of where they live, and consumers should have direct input into the goods they have access to, not filtered through market forces or bureaucrats.

Decentralization is a principle that is inherent to democracy, as a democratic society distributes decision making authority to a body of autonomous actors. Economic decentralization has several benefits that make it an appealing method of organization beyond the ethic of respecting autonomy. The first is that decentralization distributes decision making which makes the system more flexible since decision making does not have to flow upstream to a central authority. Additionally, it insulates that system from being steered by bad decision making. All people are biased and only have access to incomplete and imperfect information, thus centralized decision making heightens the risk that the whole system is subject to a bad decision stemming from bad information. Whereas, in a decentralized system multiple actors can make decisions and, provided that there are good systems of collaboration and cooperation, then bad outcomes can be selected against and good outcomes can disseminate through the system. Finally, decentralized systems mean that decision making can be more interpersonal and built upon well established relationships and can thus be less alienating and impersonal than decisions that are handed down on high. This is not an extended defense of left libertarian or anarchist political economy but rather an opportunity to explain why this is a key part of my proposal.

While I have already devoted a fair bit of ink to the question of housing provision, I want to highlight another key example of this economic system that was important to the programming of my proposal, food. One of the services that I noted is lacking in the neighborhood is groceries. The only places to buy staple items in the neighborhood are expensive boutique stores. A part of this proposal is that there should be a social responsibility to ensure that every neighborhood and community has necessities such as food, shelter, and recreation. Thus I have proposed a system of grocery cooperatives that are coordinated and funded by a municipal co-op board but are run day to day by their workers and are responsive to their neighborhoods.

Figure 6.3: *opposite.*


Municipal Co-op Board
Guaruntees funding/resources. Provides a forum for economic planning.
Sends delegates and makes requests.
Neighborhood Grocery Co-op
Democratic self-management of the day-to-day operations of the co-op.
Provide feedback and make requests.
Workers
Consumers

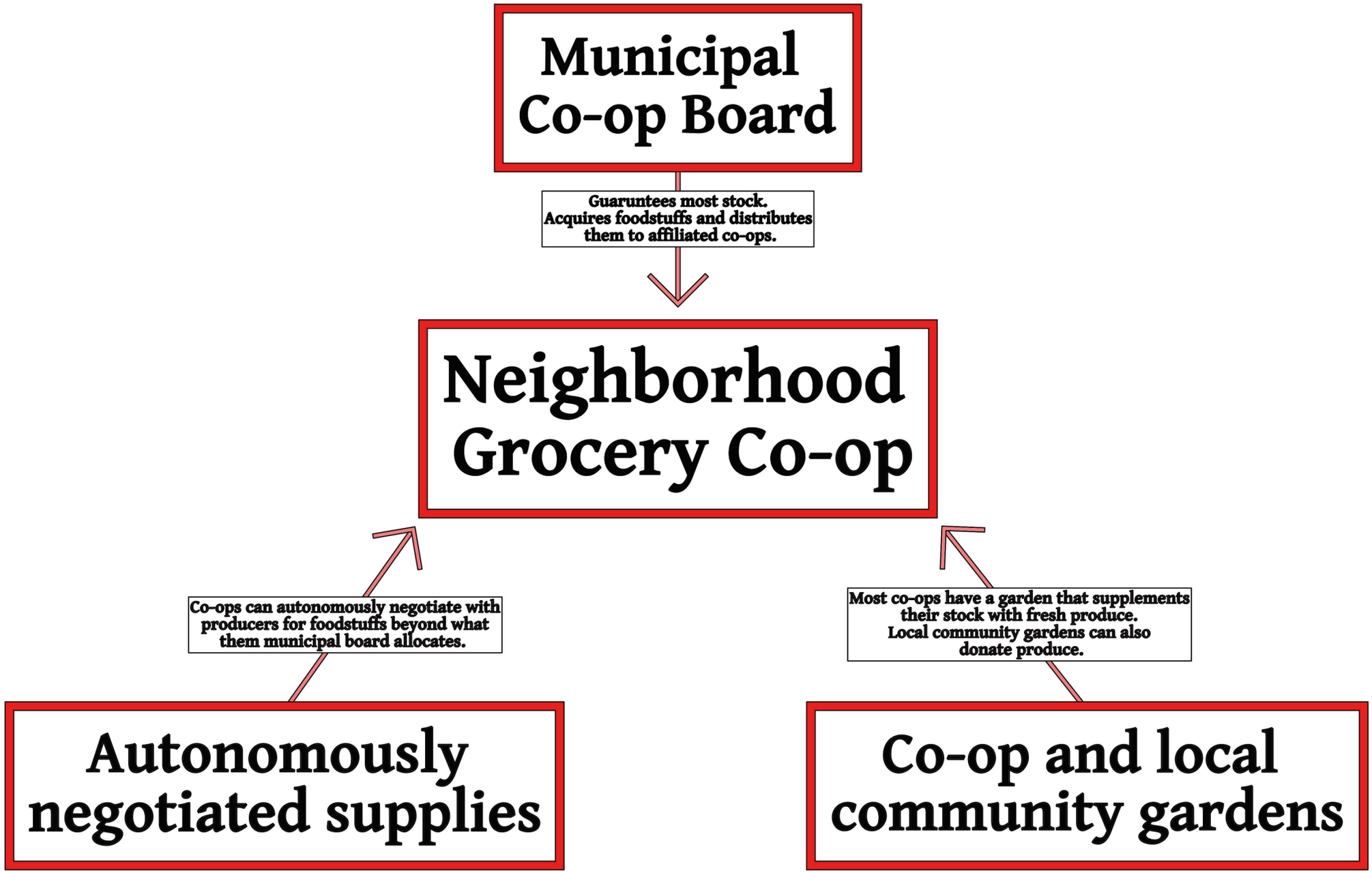
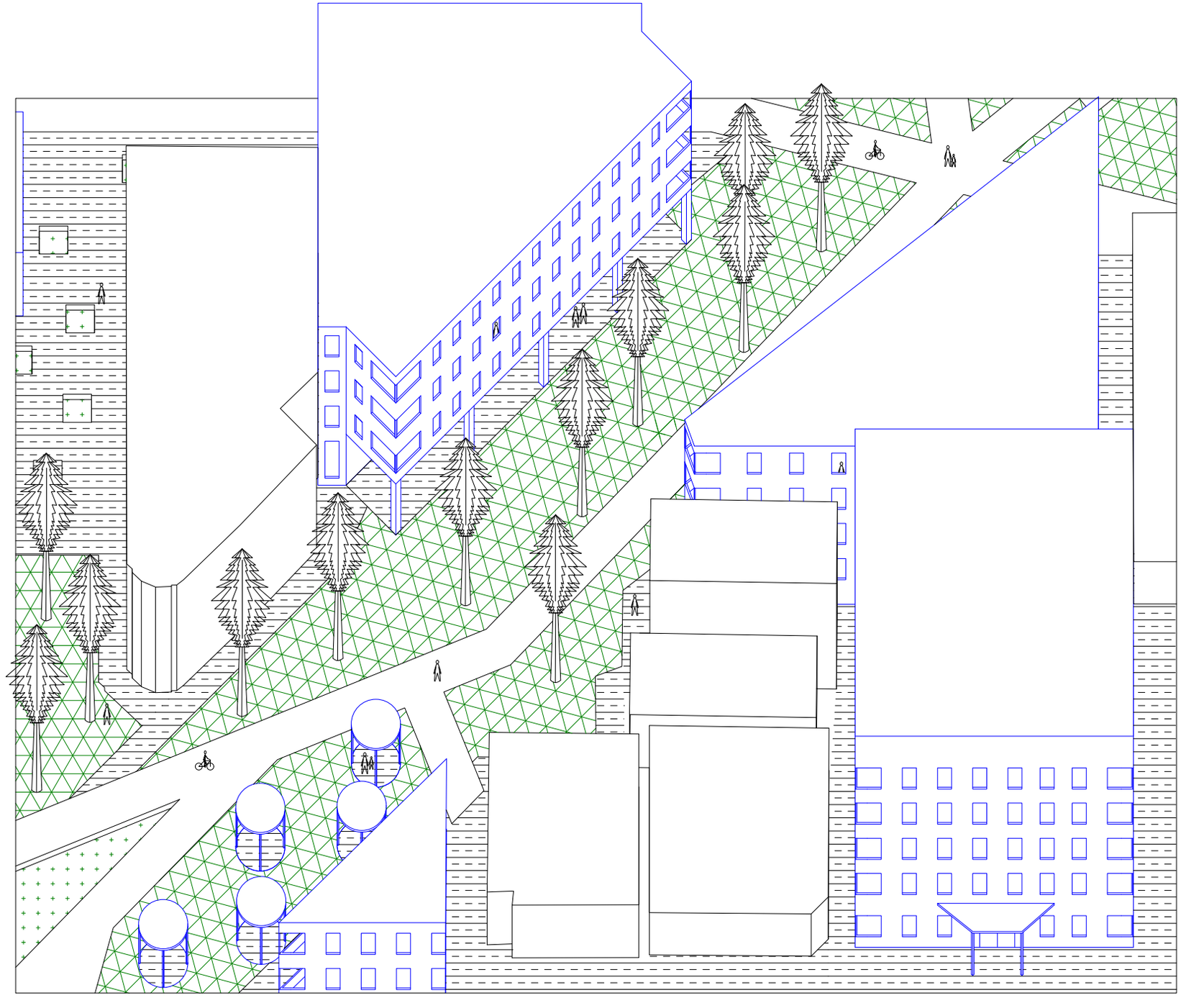

Municipal Co-op Board
Guaruntees most stock. Acquires foodstuffs and distributes them to affiliated co-ops.
Neighborhood Grocery Co-op
Co-ops can autonomously negotiate with producers for foodstuffs beyond what them municipal board allocates.
Most co-ops have a garden that supplements their stock with fresh produce. Local community gardens can also donate produce.
Autonomously negotiated supplies
Co-op and local community gardens

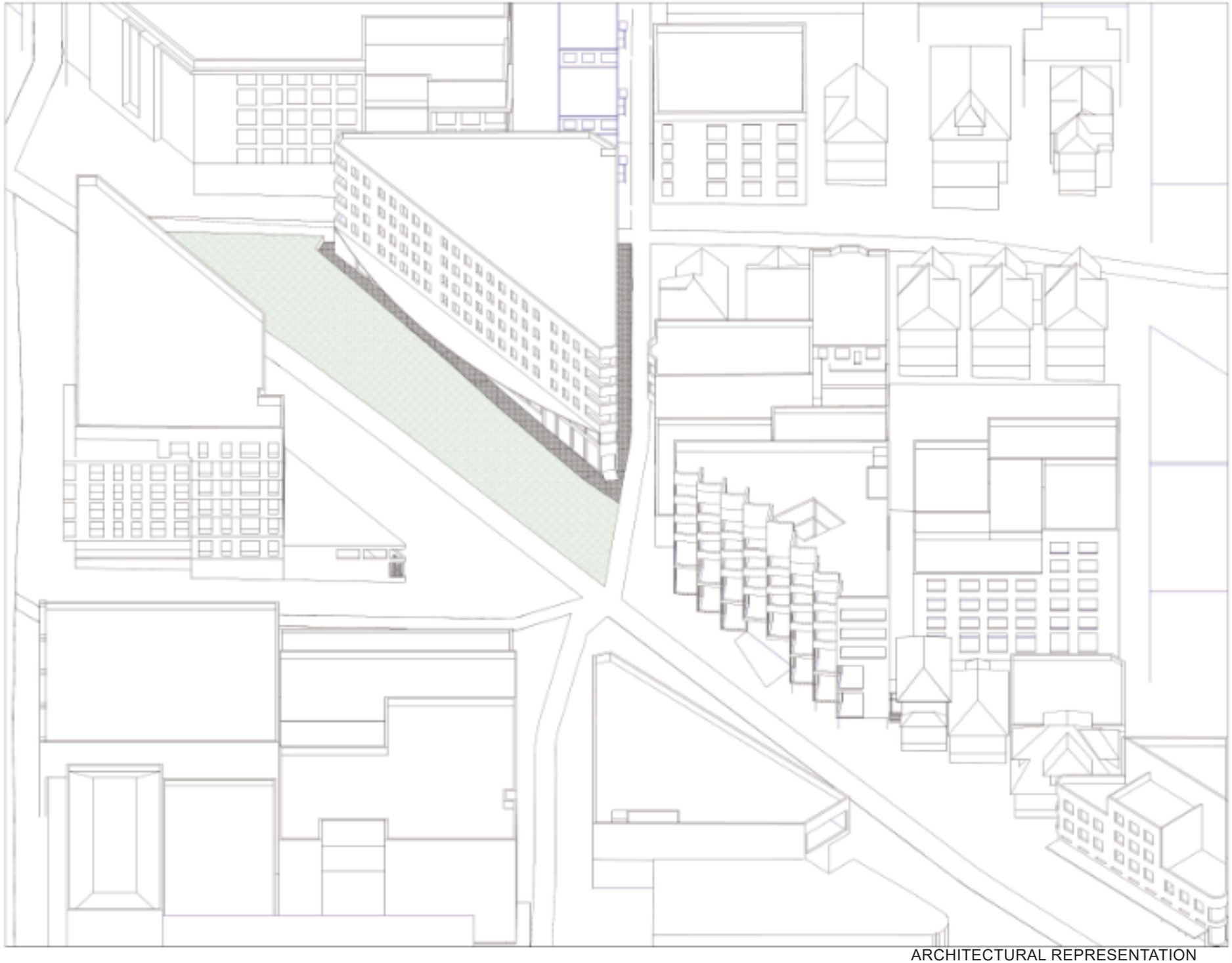
Figure 6.4.

Architectural Representation

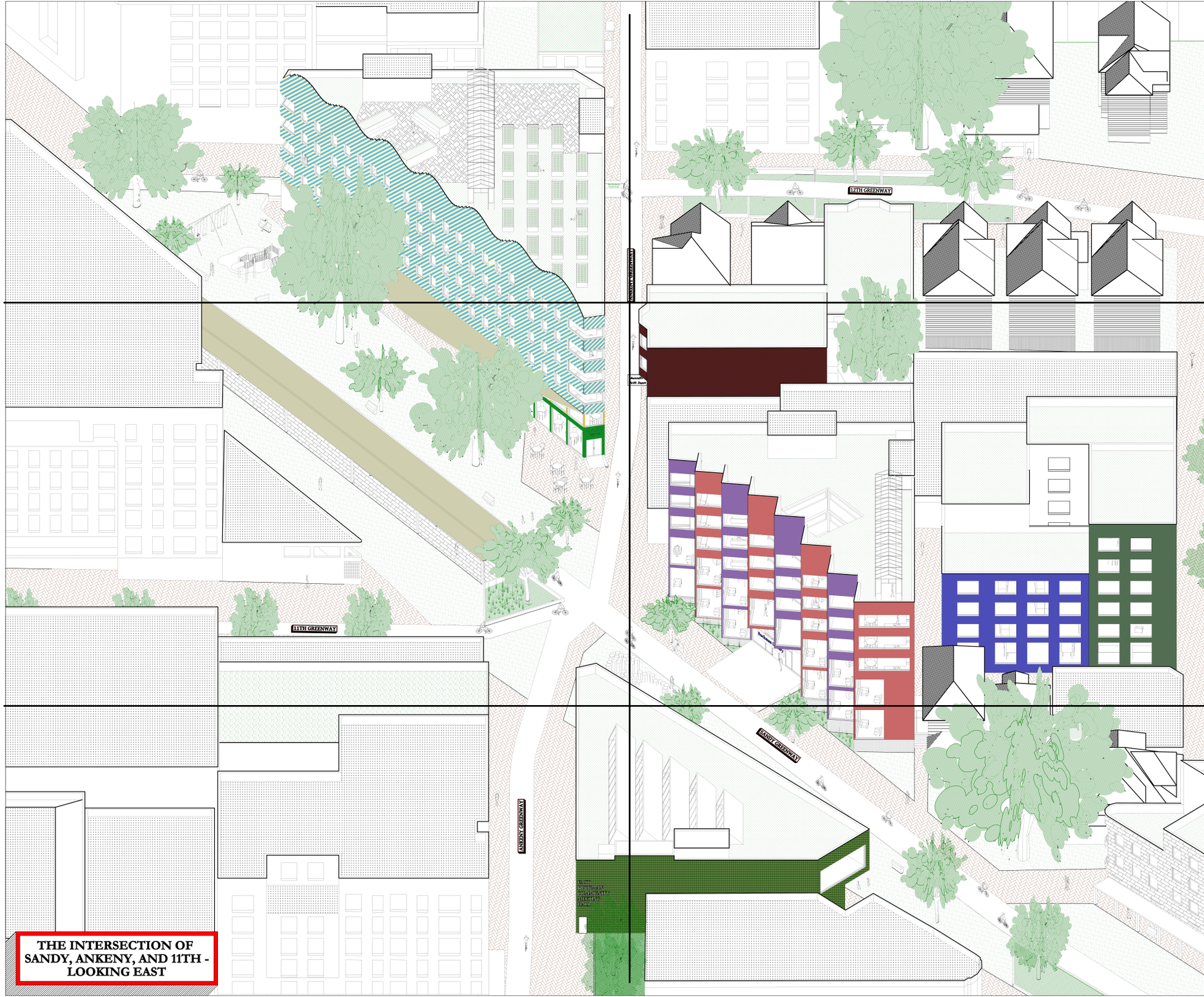
As I noted in the introduction of this book, I began this process in part to find and develop my graphical language so that I could better communicate my vision for a better world. It is not sufficient to just describe what I want to see, I want to be able to show it. Hence, I want to devote some of this book to reflect on the decisions I made during this thesis that produced the graphical language of my final output. Initially, I was inclined to make detailed 3D models in Rhino 3D and use a render engine like Twin Motion to produce "photorealistic" renders. However, after encouragement from Andrew I began to experiment with isometric renders. At first I used trace paper over my site plans before moving to digitally drafting over plans. These first isometric drawings were exciting because the site seemed to come to life. I had some modeling done at this point but the flat geometries in Rhino felt unreal and lifeless, whereas the isometric drawings started to create a feeling of fidelity. Ultimately, my workflow was to model the site very faithfully in detail before setting the camera to an isometric view and using the "Make 2D" command to produce a flat drawing, which I then edited with hatches and line weights. The final result is a drawing that feels rich and detailed.

In my opinion the drawing is far more lively than a computer render which, despite huge technical gains, all too often feels dead and uncanny. Moreso, the nature of a drawing like this invites the viewer to look deeper and search for details in a way that a computer render often does not. Additionally, this thesis is ultimately fiction, and while it is fiction that presents a vision for a future that could be, it is just a story. The story needs to be believable but with enough abstraction that the audience can take it as a starting point and begin their own speculation about what could be. Over the last few years I have heard professionals remark that photorealistic renders have got them in trouble, as clients do not realize that what actually gets built will not be exactly the same. I believe that is pertinent to this thesis as I would not claim to have all of the answers, nor can I predict the future. Instead these drawings and my writing should be a means of inspiration to push others to dream about what the world can still become.

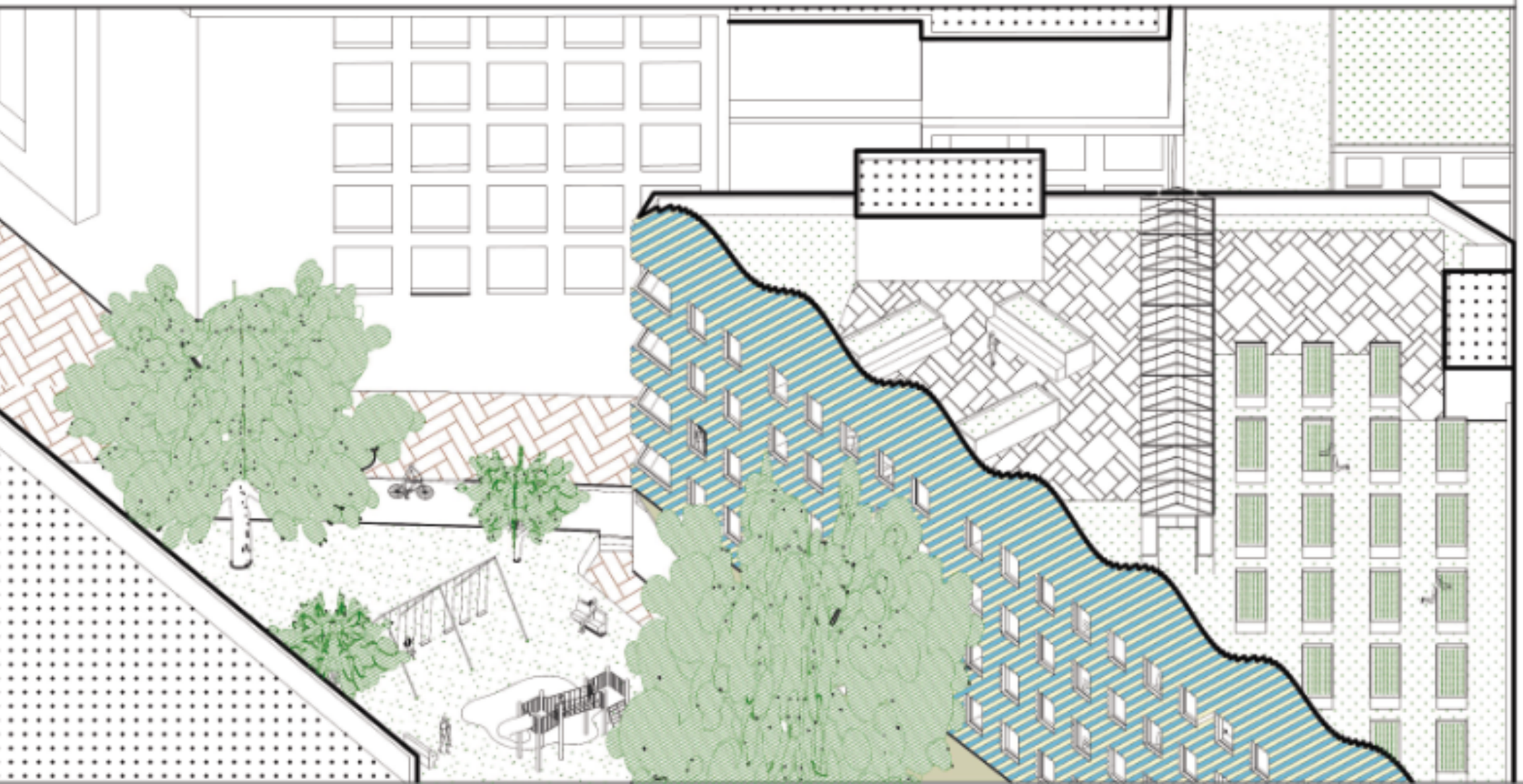


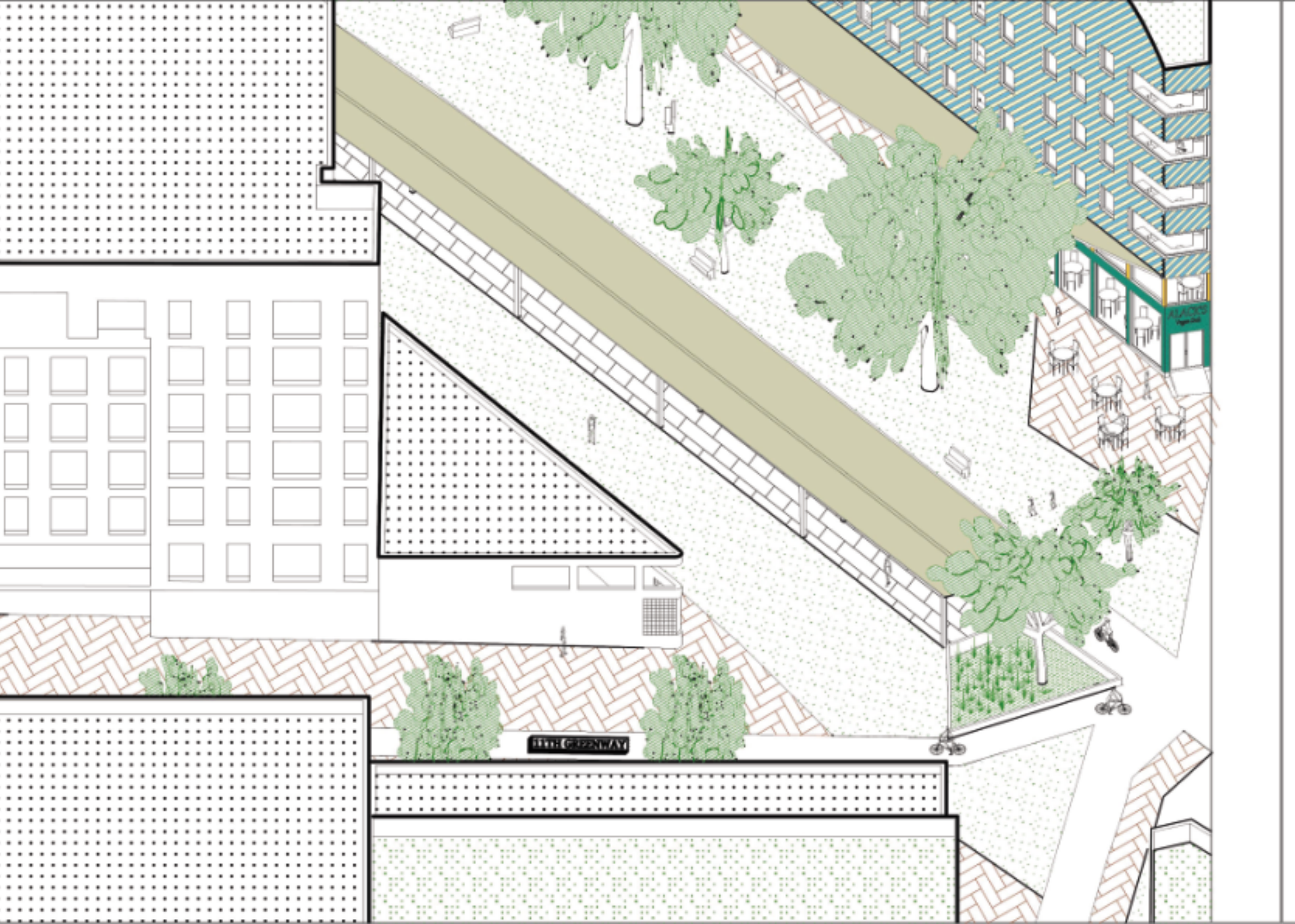


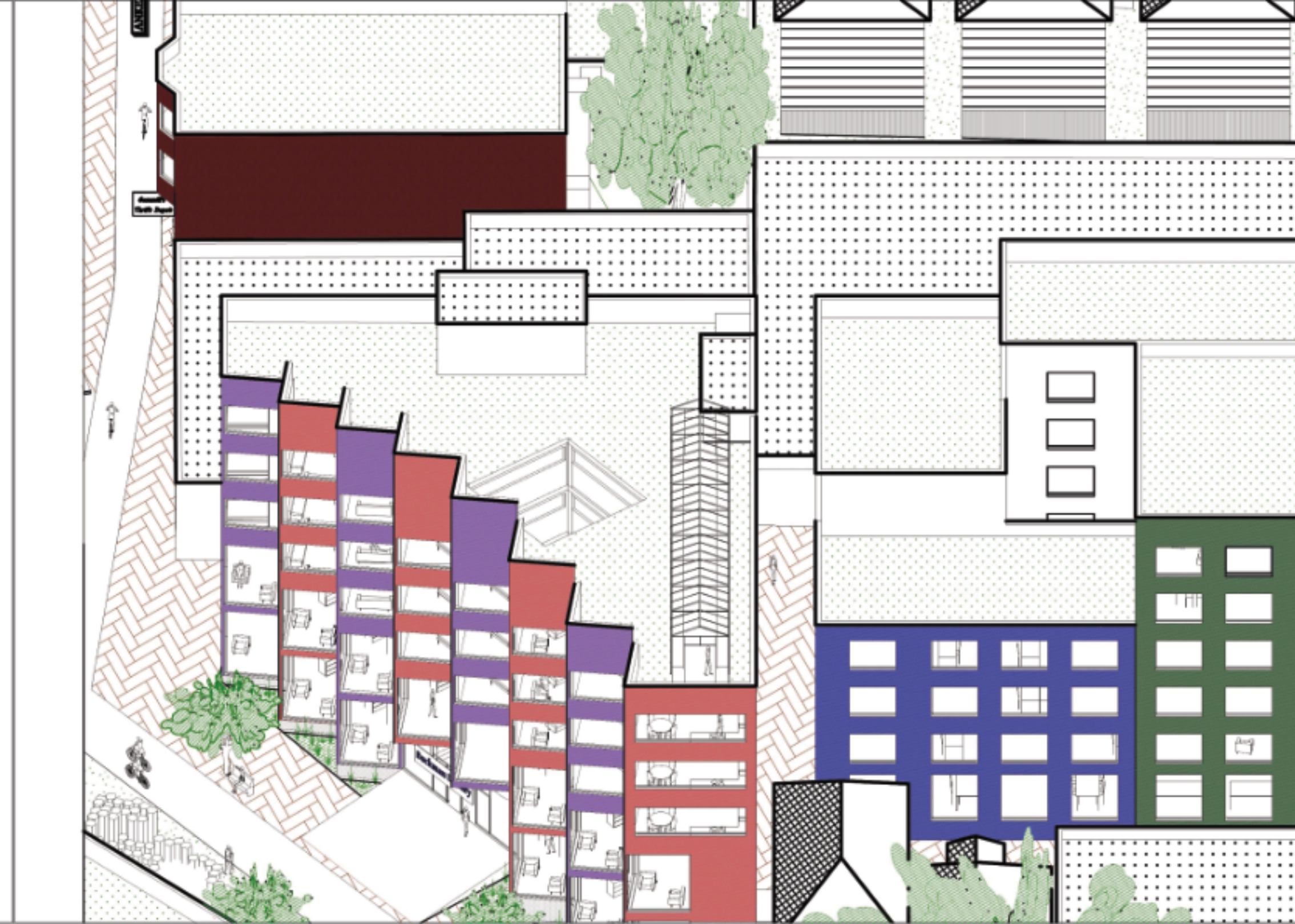
The next nine pages showcase the main isometric drawing that I produced for this thesis. The original drawing was printed at 44” x 53” which is more than twice the scale that these pages permit. Thus I have opted to spilt the drawing into three strips so that some of the detail will come through in this book. Page 50, opposite, show the entire drawing with lines indicating where it was cut to fit on the following pages. Pages 51-56 feature the drawing divded into three bands and displayed across the enitre spread. Pages 57-58 show the final presentatin pinup for this thesis to give a sense of perspective for how the drawing was meant to be view. I invite you to spend some time on these pages in particular to take in the details of this drawing.

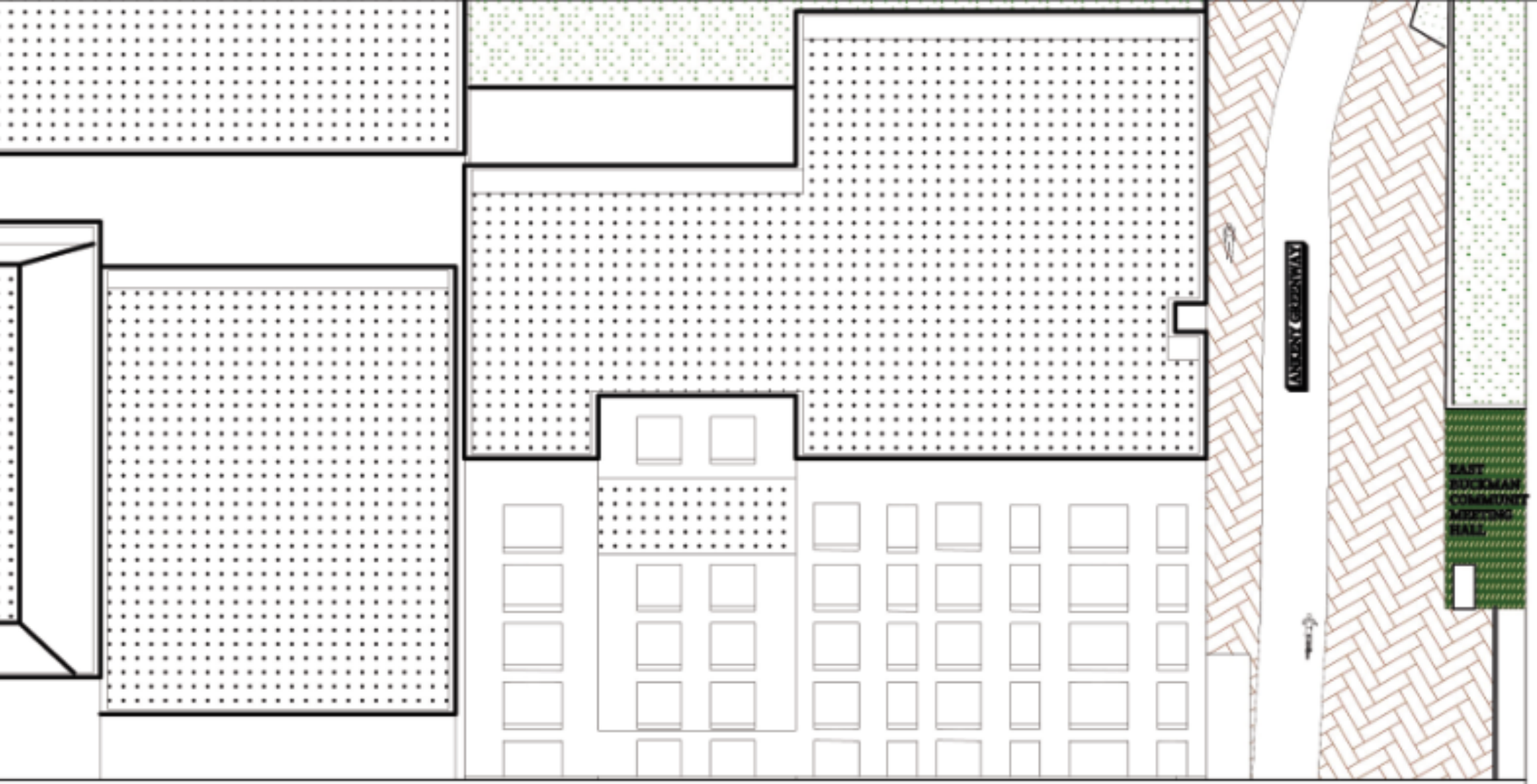


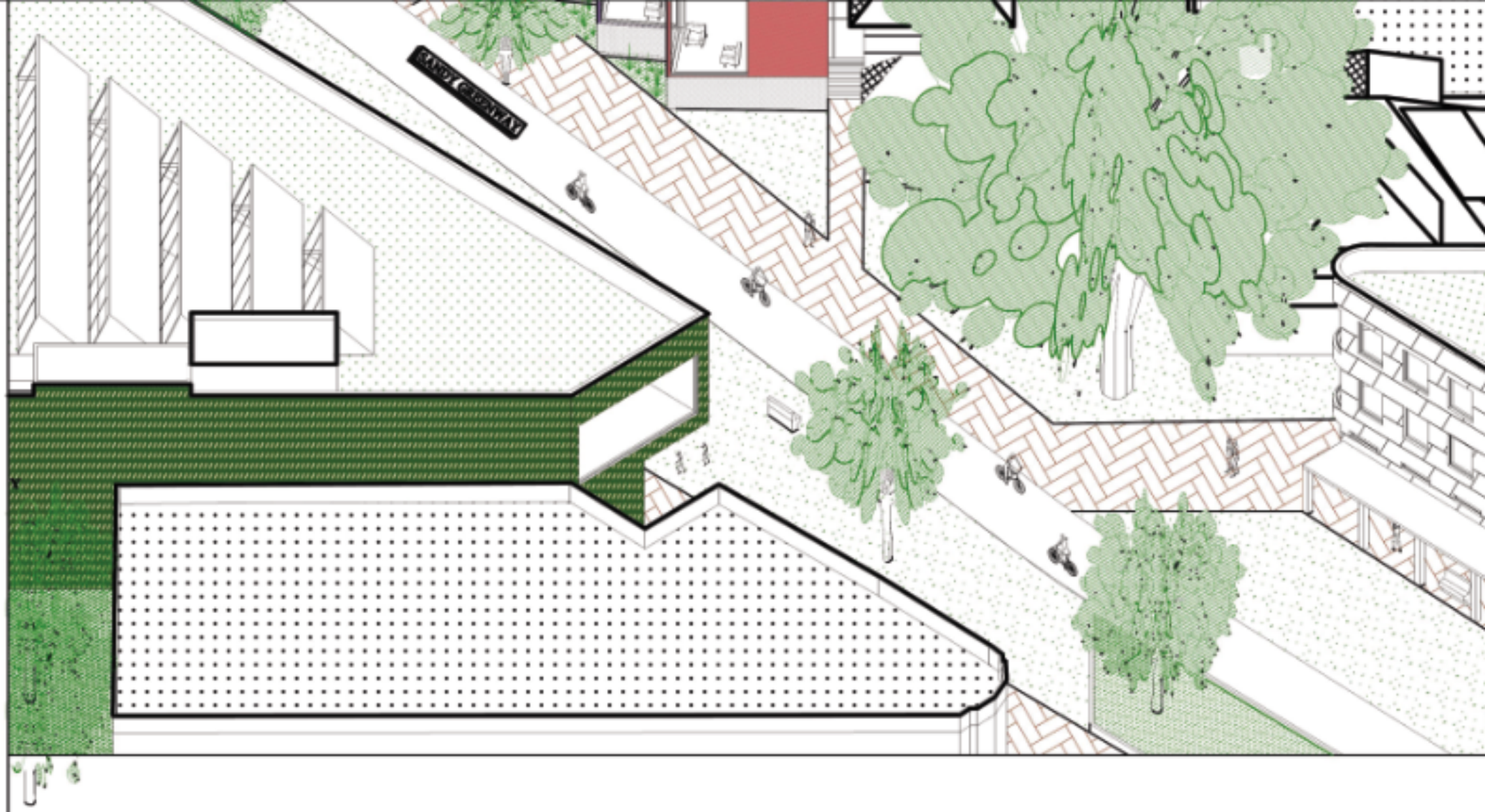
THE INTERSECTION OF SANDY, ANKENY, AND 11TH - LOOKING EAST





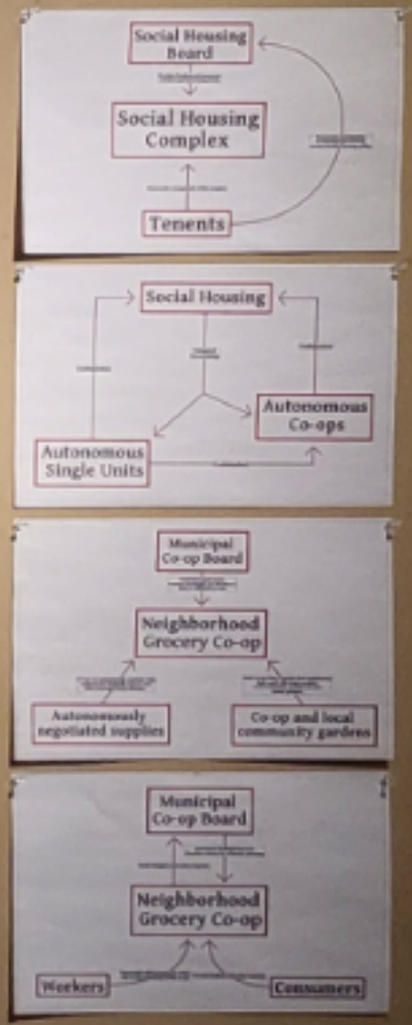



ANDREW GREENWAY
EAST BUCKMAN COMMUNITY MEETING HALL



URBAN STEWARD
A Vision for a Sustainab
Sandy Degrowth Corridor
Parkrose
Roseway
Rose City Park
Hollywood
Laurelhurst
East Buckman

D:AN STEWARDSHIP:
b for a Sustainable Portland



Conclusion

This thesis has proposed the basis of an approach to urbanism that holds stewardship as one of its key tenets. An urbanism that views the environment, both human and non human, as something to be safeguarded and maintained in perpetuity. This is a view that society, the economy, and ecology must be held as equal pillars for long term sustainability. This urbanism is democratic, consensual, and decentralized. It is a process that does not hold a fixed or narrow view of what is possible and what human beings are capable of, but instead it holds that society is ever changing and can take on infinite forms. It is set in a world that we do not yet know, but I believe is waiting for us if we can find the courage to believe in it.

We must dream of a better world if we want to have any hope of addressing the present crisies. There has been so much written and said about how we got here and what is happening and what is likely to happen if we do not change course, but it feels like so little has been suggested for an alternative. Fredric Jameson once said "it is easier to imagine the end of the world than the end of capitalism". This quote is practically cliche now but it speaks to a fundamental problem which is that we have been indoctrinated to believe that a sustainable world is not practical, that a genuinely equal world is naive, that exploitation and domination are simply human nature. This thesis roundly rejects that line of thinking a calls upon you to dare to dream. We are not doomed to repeat the mistakes of the past and present, but in order to plot an escape trajectory we need a destination. It does not have to be perfect nor entirely clear but we need a direction. We have been endowed with immense creativity. It cannot be possible that this is it, the best we can do as the present system drives us to the edge of oblivion. So I ask you to dream. Dream big, dream of a future that might sound impossible but believe in it anyway. Then write about it, sing about it, draw it. When enough of us break out of the confines of what we have been told is possible and we can synthesize our bold ideas and iterate together we can plot a course to a better future.

Beyond

As I conclude this book, and this chapter of my life, I want to offer some thoughts about where this thesis might lead. I have already mentioned a few things that I want to explore further but there are two specific avenues that really interest me. The first is how architecture would change and evolve in this hypothetical society. When I applied to this program I wrote a statement of intent wherein I tied my educational background in anthropology to my desire to study architecture. In that piece I wrote something along the lines of “culture produces buildings and buildings are where culture happens." I set out on this journey, in part, to gain deeper insight into how culture informs built space. I believe that this thesis starts down that path by critiquing very high level questions about the use of and provisioning of space. However, I want to go deeper and ask how would the floorplan of a democratic co-op be different from a capitalist grocery store, how might apartments be arranged differently in social housing and cohousing, how else could the community meeting hall be laid out? These questions are all projects in and of themselves with their own challenges and opportunities, but to really answer these questions I must also explore the realm of fiction.

I have already done some world building for this story to set the scene for how something so different from our status quo could come about, but there are many more questions to be answered and many more stories to tell. I want to think about who lives here. How do they go about their day? What is work like at the co-op, the thrift store, or the library? Where do they go when they leave the neighborhood and how do they get there? What is their social life like? Do they go on group rides and drink at Worker’s Tap? Do they sit on the swings at three in the morning with their friends after a night out just enjoying each other's company and the simple pleasure of swaying back and forth? One of my biggest influences has been Ursula K. LeGuin, whose novels have inspired me to dream bigger and think about all the many details of a culture that I have not lived. That is the essence of this thesis, imagining a world that could be. I will continue to think about this in the coming years and I hope you will too.

Endnotes

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2. Hirt, 2014.
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4. Gonzalez, 2008.
5. Grabar, Henry. 2023. Paved Paradise. Penguin.
6. “Results of Heat Mapping Project Show Inequitable Impact of Hotter Summers, Will Inform Actions by Multnomah, Washington and Clackamas Counties,” Multnomah County, November 27, 2024, https://multco.us/news/results-heat-mapping-project-show-inequitable-impact-hotter-summers-will-inform-actions.
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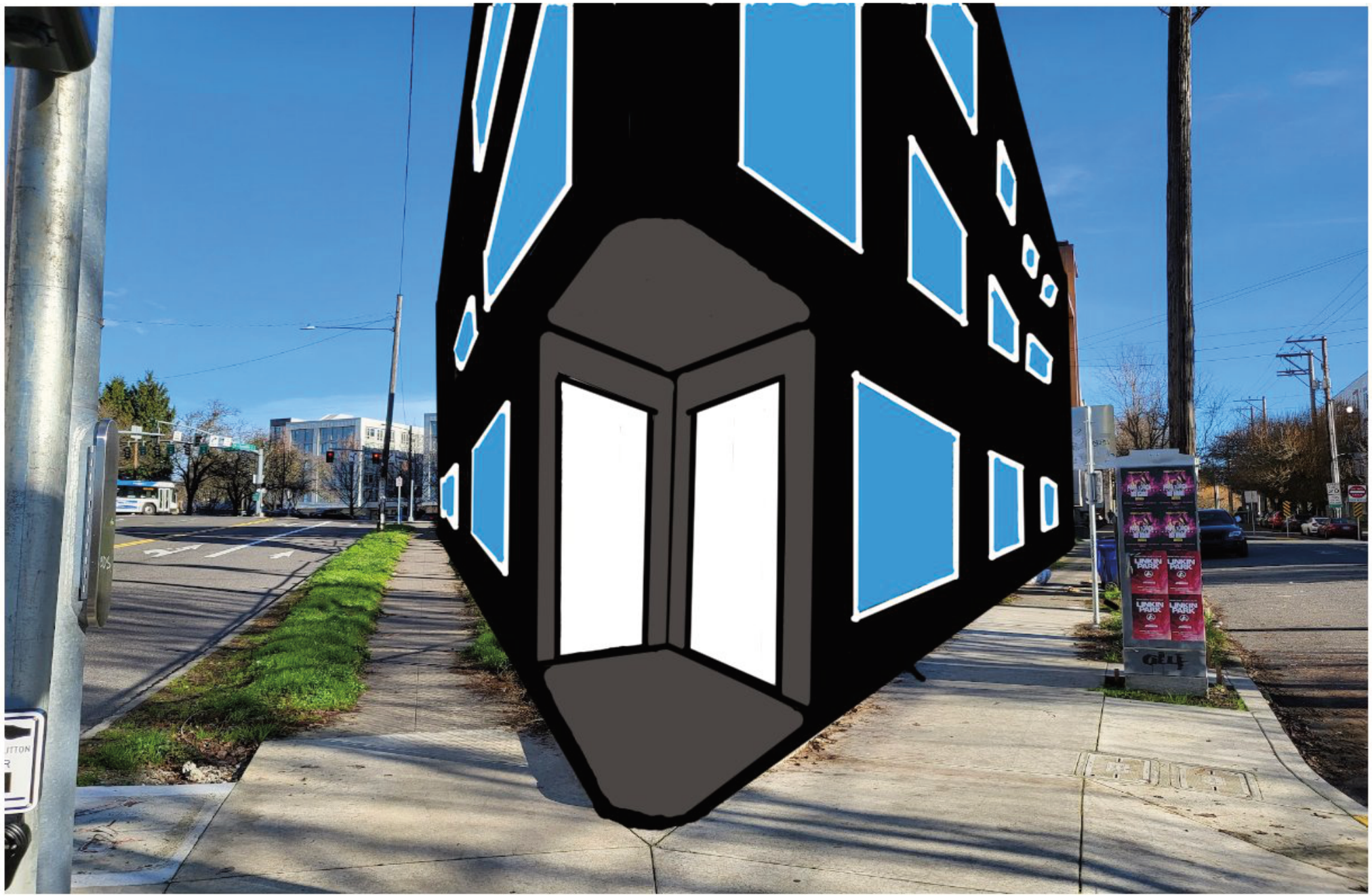
Appendix: Process Work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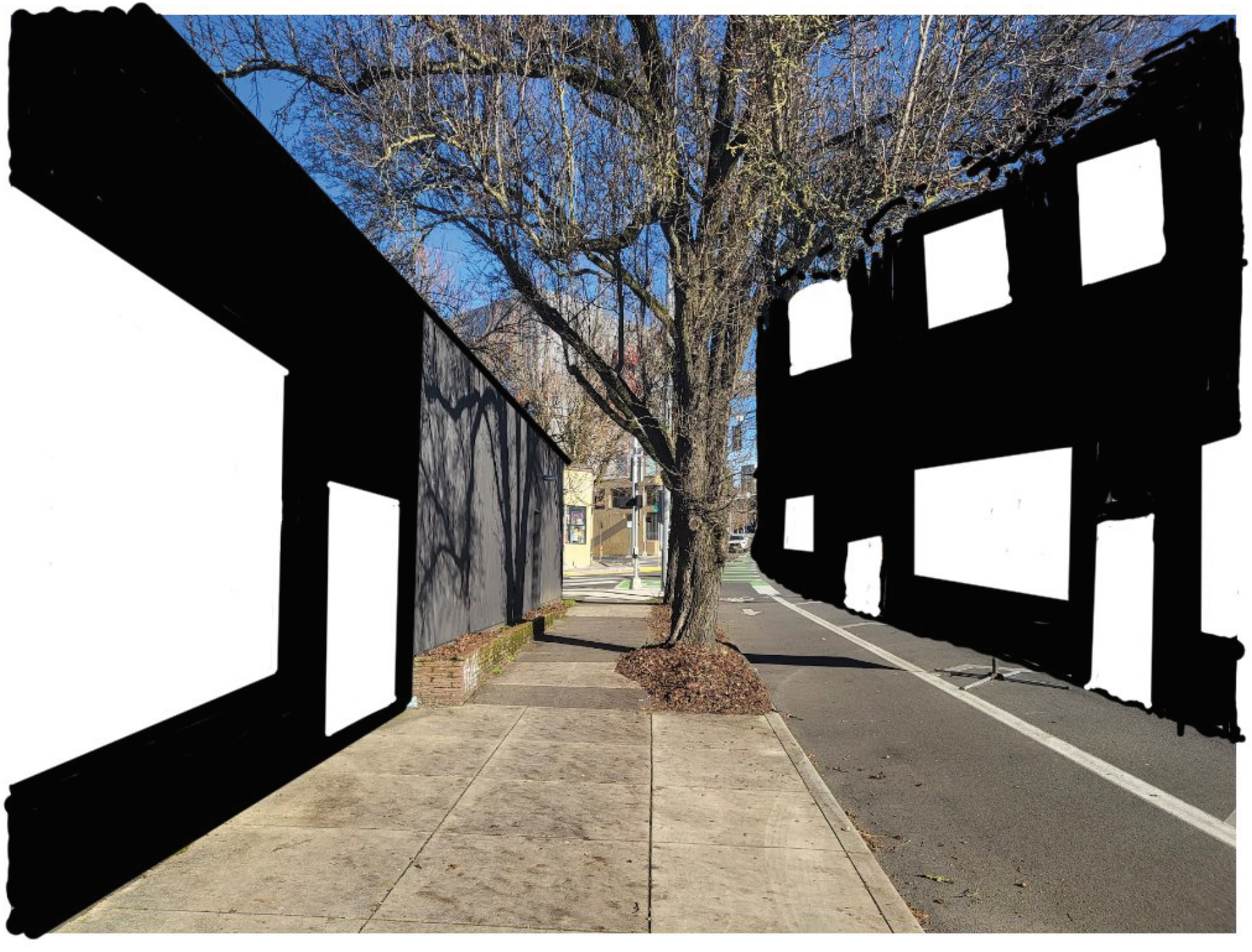
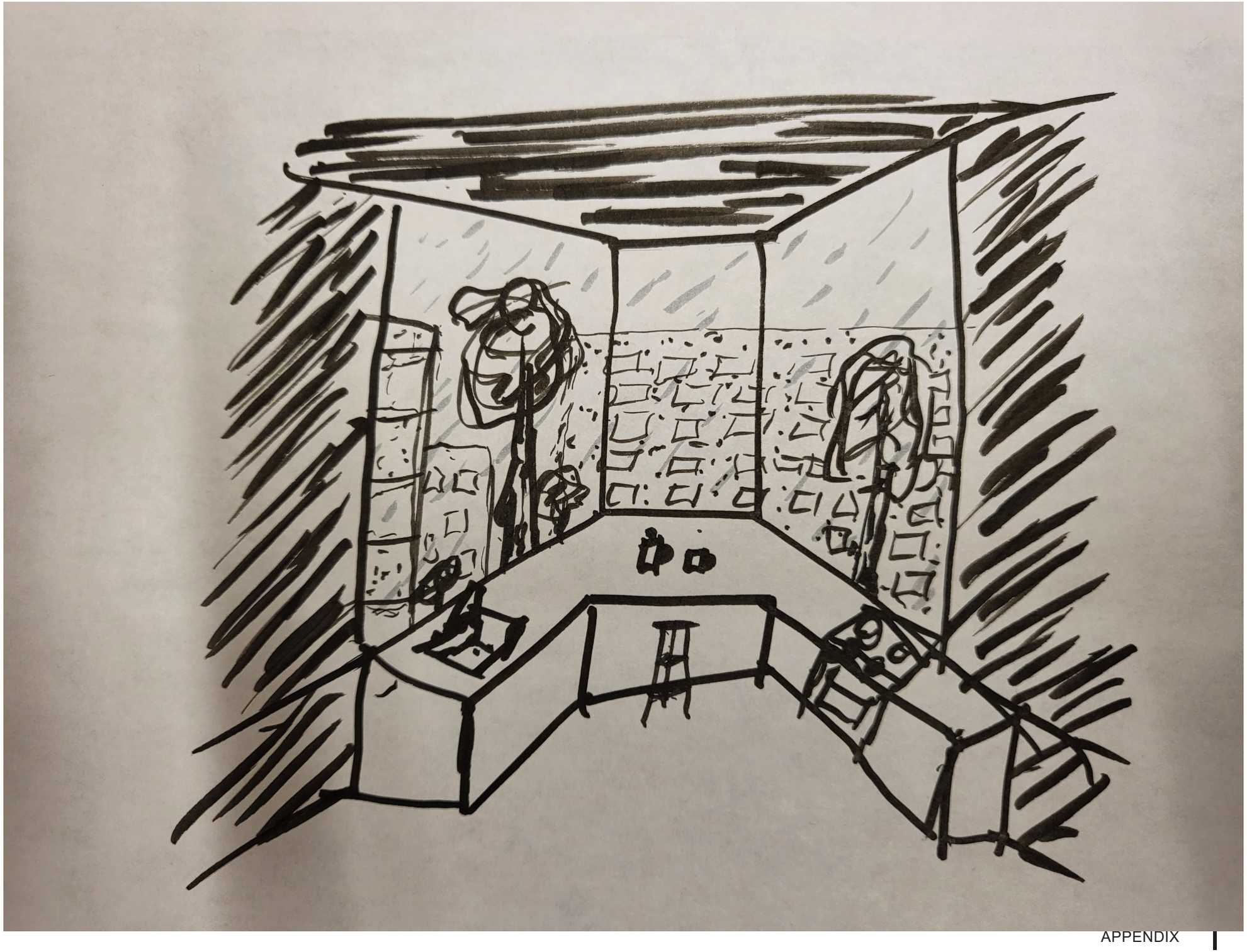
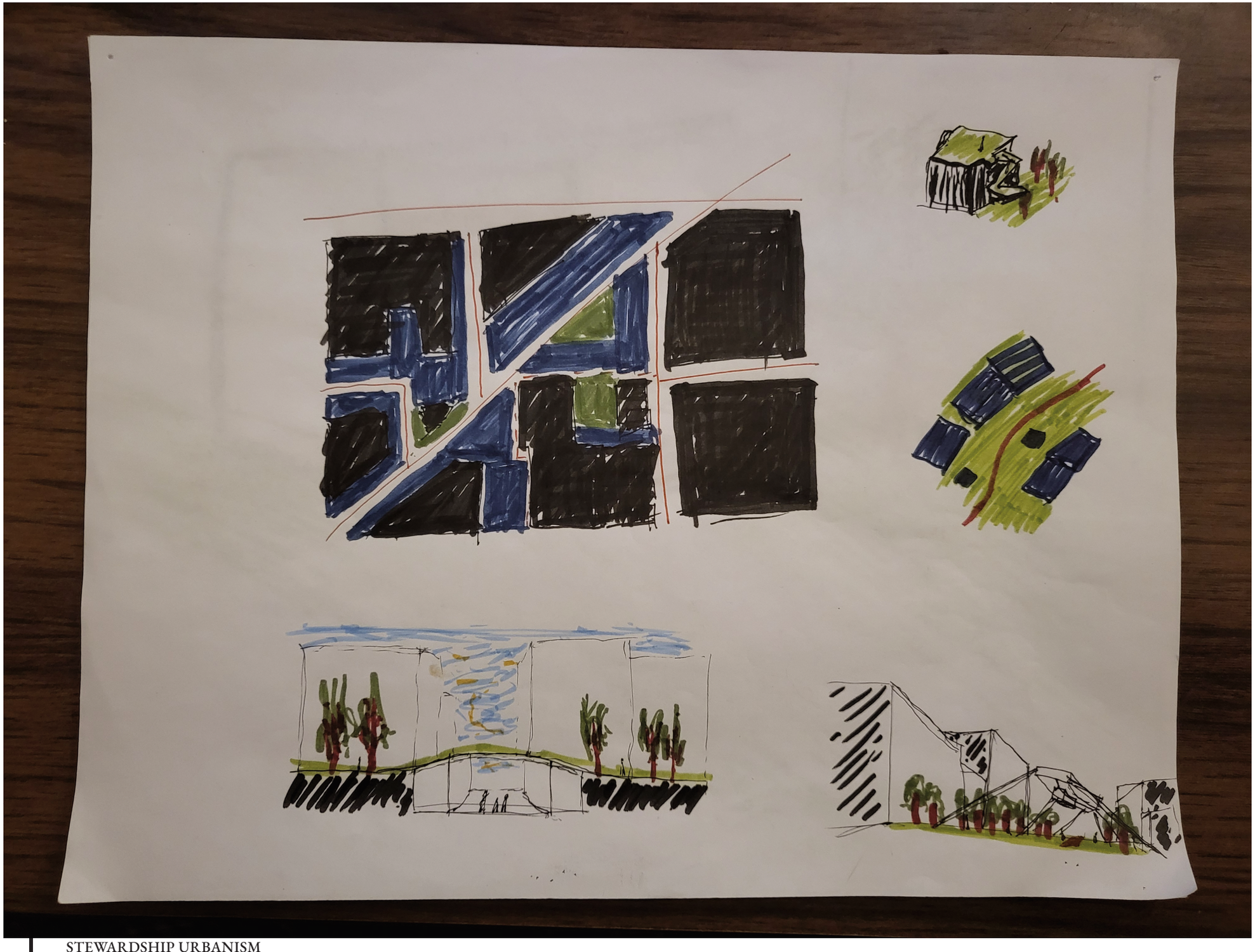
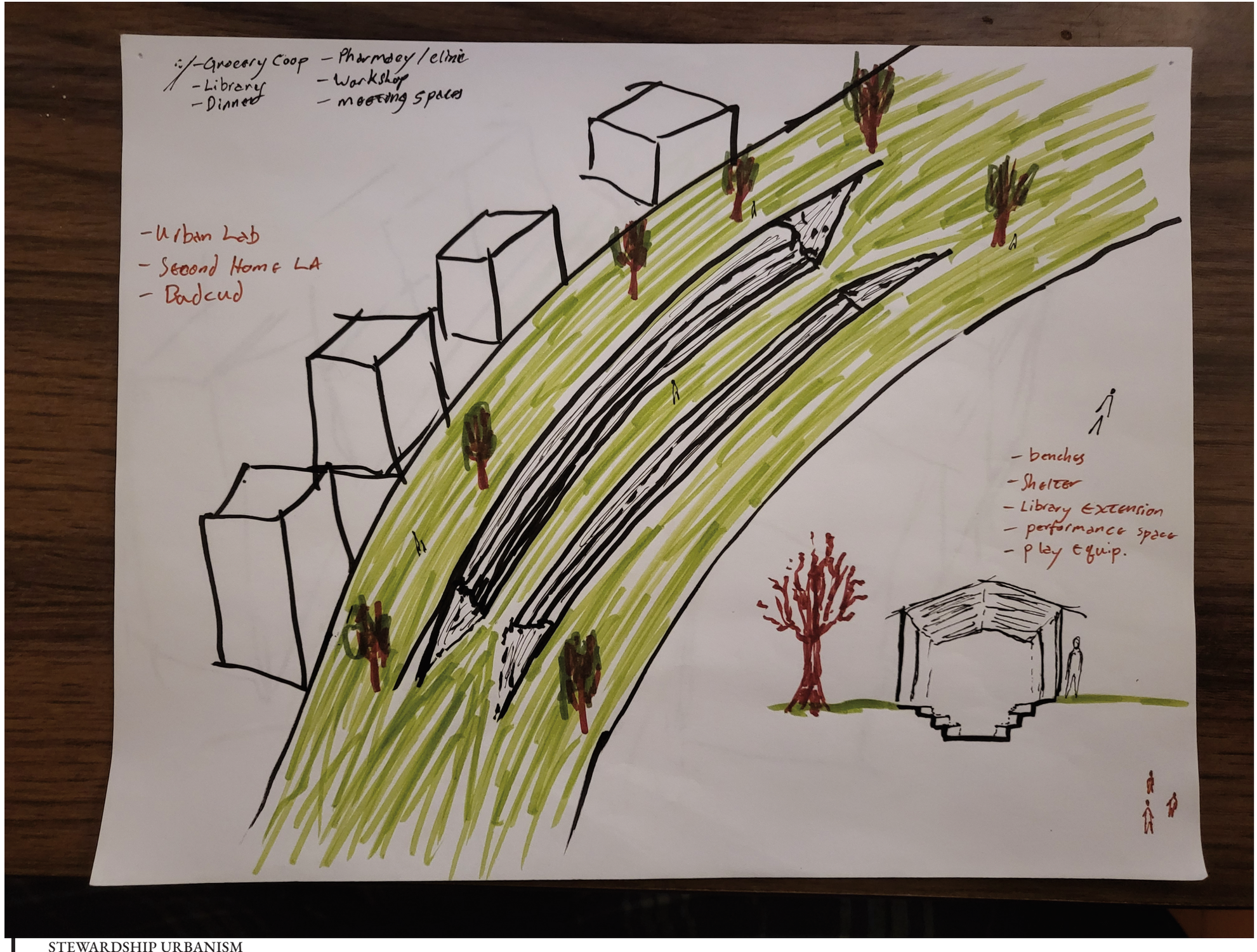
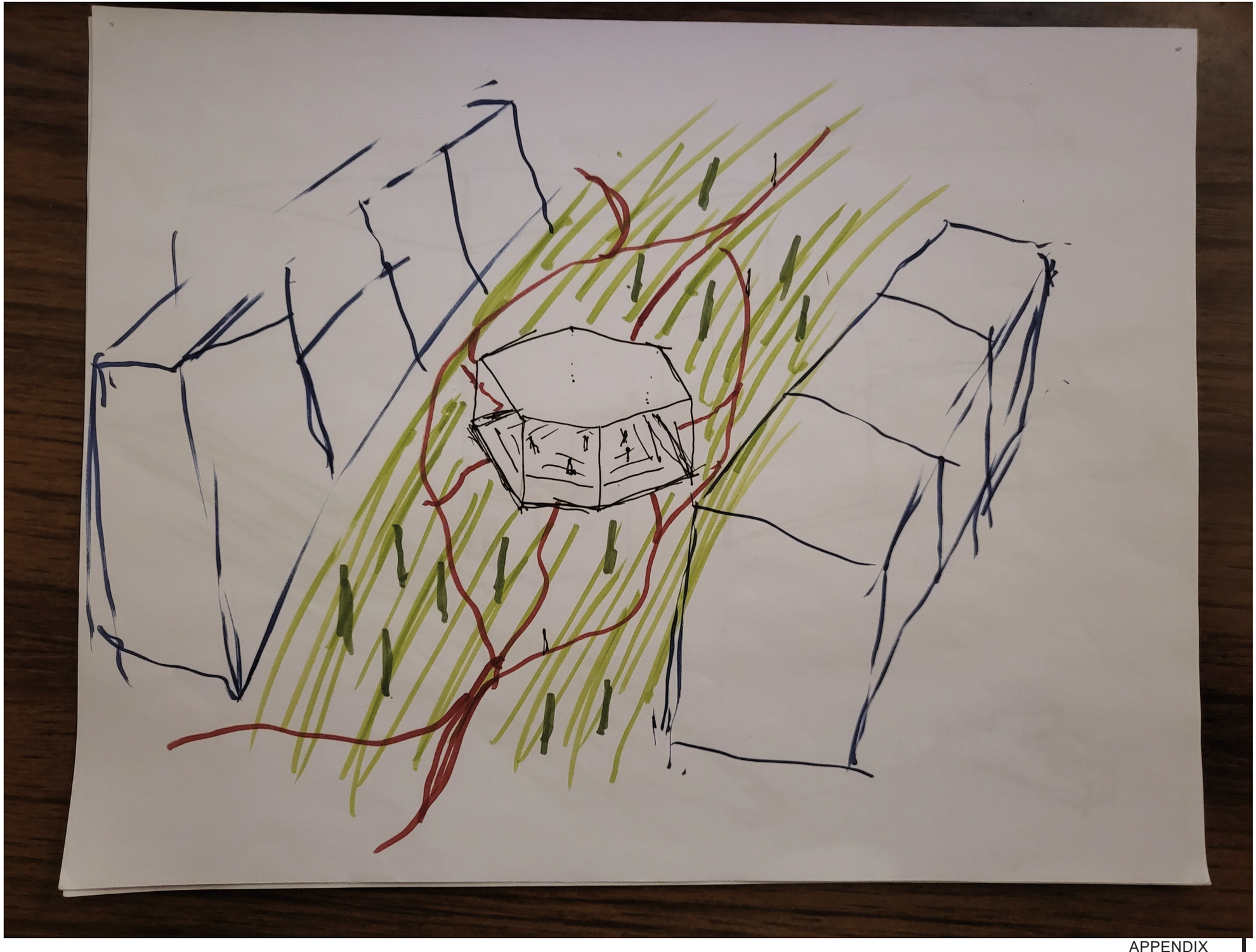


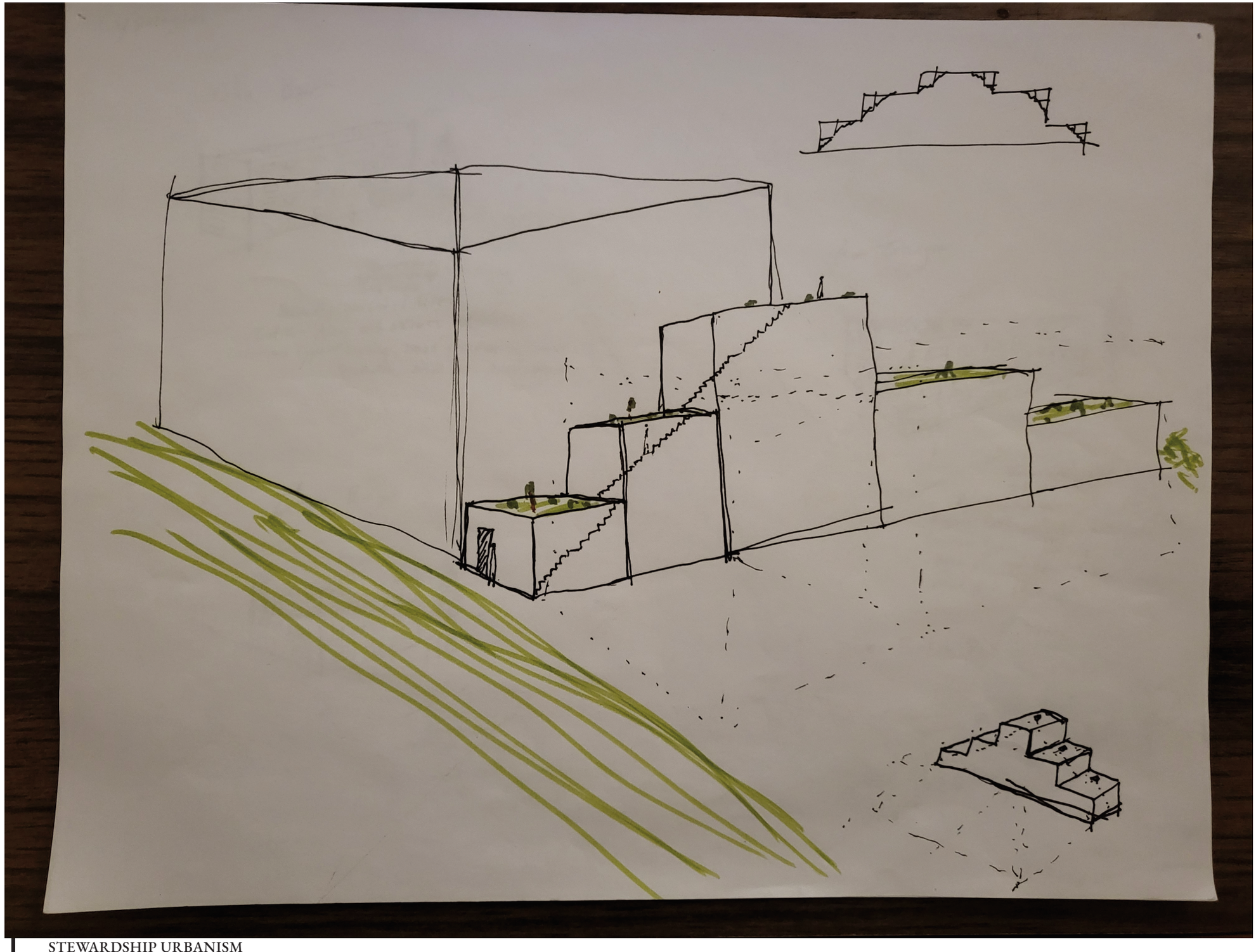




Old Hat Bing Bong

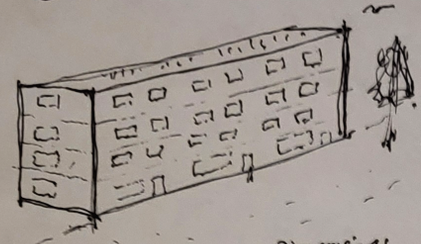

-Grocery Coop
-Library
-Dinner
- Pharmacy / clinic
- Workshop
- meeting spaces
- Urban Lab
- Second Home LA
- Dadcud
- benches
- Shelter
- Library Extension
- performance space
- play equip.





Typologies

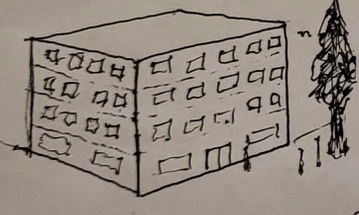
The Bar



Dimensions:
30'-40' deep, 100'-200' long
3-8 storeys

Recommended Uses:
Infill - Along old street ROWs
commons type - housing, small consumptive commons, small rec, small pol. flat/produce on roof

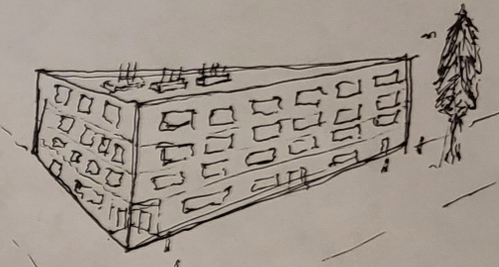
The Box



Dimensions:
30'x30' - 60'x60'

Infill - into existing blocks, sometimes in ROWs
commons: housing, med rec, med consump. comp, small health, med ed, med small pol,

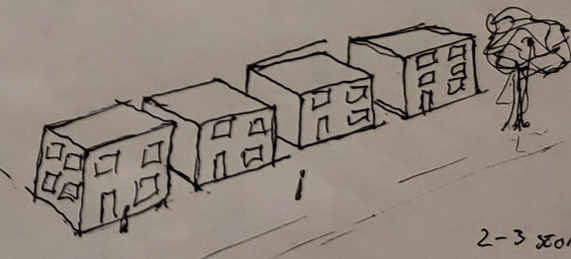
The Triangle



Dimensions:
3-8 storeys

Recommended uses: Infill - Along diagonal ROWs, in "awkward" spaces
commons types - housing, large rec, large ed, med-large consump., med pol med pol., small rec, small health

The Broken Bar



2-3 storeys
housing, small commons
in ROWs